

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE MOONSTONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c. &c.

Prologue.

THE STORMING OF SERINGAPATAM (1799):
(*Extracted from a Family Paper*).

I.

I ADDRESS these lines—written in India—to my relatives in England.

My object is to explain the motive which has induced me to refuse the right hand of friendship to my cousin, John Herncastle. The reserve which I have hitherto maintained in this matter has been misinterpreted by members of my family whose good opinion I cannot consent to forfeit. I request them to suspend their decision until they have read my narrative. And I declare, on my word of honour, that what I am now about to write is, strictly and literally, the truth.

The private difference between my cousin and me took its rise in a great public event in which we were both concerned—the storming of Seringapatam, under General Baird, on the 4th of May, 1799.

In order that the circumstances may be clearly understood, I must revert for a moment to the period before the assault, and to the stories current in our camp of the treasure in jewels and gold stored up in the Palace of Seringapatam.

II.

One of the wildest of these stories related to a Yellow Diamond—a famous gem in the native annals of India.

The earliest known traditions describe the stone as having been set in the forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the Moon. Partly from its peculiar colour, partly from a superstition which represented it as feeling the influence of the deity whom it adorned, and growing and lessening in lustre with the waxing and waning of the moon, it first gained the name by which it continues to be known in India to this day—the name of THE MOONSTONE. A similar superstition was once prevalent, as I have heard, in ancient Greece and Rome; not applying, however (as in India), to a diamond devoted to the service of a god, but to a semi-transparent stone of the inferior order of gems, supposed to be affected by the lunar influences—the

moon, in this latter case also, giving the name by which the stone is still known to collectors in our own time.

The adventures of the Yellow Diamond begin with the eleventh century of the Christian era.

At that date, the Mohammedan conqueror, Mahmoud of Ghizni, crossed India; seized on the holy city of Somnauth; and stripped of its treasures the famous temple, which had stood for centuries—the shrine of Hindoo pilgrimage, and the wonder of the Eastern world.

Of all the deities worshipped in the temple, the moon-god alone escaped the rapacity of the conquering Mohammedans. Preserved by three Brahmins, the inviolate deity, bearing the Yellow Diamond in its forehead, was removed by night, and was transported to the second of the sacred cities of India—the city of Benares.

Here, in a new shrine—in a hall inlaid with precious stones, under a roof supported by pillars of gold—the moon-god was set up and worshipped. Here, on the night when the shrine was completed, Vishnu the Preserver appeared to the three Brahmins in a dream.

The deity breathed the breath of his divinity on the Diamond in the forehead of the god. And the Brahmins knelt and hid their faces in their robes. The deity commanded that the Moonstone should be watched, from that time forth, by three priests in turn, night and day, to the end of the generations of men. And the Brahmins heard, and bowed before his will. The deity predicted certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem, and to all of his house and name who received it after him. And the Brahmins caused the prophecy to be written over the gates of the shrine in letters of gold.

One age followed another—and still, generation after generation, the successors of the three Brahmins watched their priceless Moonstone, night and day. One age followed another, until the first years of the eighteenth Christian century saw the reign of Aurungzebe, Emperor of the Moguls. At his command, havoc and rapine were let loose once more among the temples of the worship of Brahma. The shrine of the four-handed god was polluted by the slaughter of sacred animals; the images of the deities were broken in pieces; and the Moonstone was seized by an officer of rank in the army of Aurungzebe.

Powerless to recover their lost treasure by

open force, the three guardian priests followed and watched it in disguise. The generations succeeded each other; the warrior who had committed the sacrilege perished miserably; the Moonstone passed (carrying its curse with it) from one lawless Mohammedan hand to another; and still, through all chances and changes, the successors of the three guardian priests kept their watch, waiting the day when the will of Vishnu the Preserver should restore to them their sacred gem. Time rolled on from the first to the last years of the eighteenth Christian century. The Diamond fell into the possession of Tipoo, Sultan of Seringapatam, who caused it to be placed as an ornament in the handle of a dagger, and who commanded it to be kept among the choicest treasures of his armoury. Even then—in the palace of the Sultan himself—the three guardian priests still kept their watch in secret. There were three officers of Tipoo's household, strangers to the rest, who had won their master's confidence by conforming, or appearing to conform, to the Mussulman faith; and to those three men report pointed, as the three priests in disguise.

III.

So, as told in our camp, ran the fanciful story of the Moonstone. It made no serious impression on any of us except my cousin—whose love of the marvellous induced him to believe it. On the night before the assault on Seringapatam, he was absurdly angry with me, and with others, for treating the whole thing as a fable. A foolish wrangle followed; and Herneastle's unlucky temper got the better of him. He declared, in his boastful way, that we should see the Diamond on his finger, if the English army took Seringapatam. The sally was saluted by a roar of laughter, and there, as we all thought that night, the thing ended.

Let me now take you on to the day of the assault.

My cousin and I were separated at the outset. I never saw him when we forded the river; when we planted the English flag in the first breach; when we crossed the ditch beyond; and, fighting every inch of our way, entered the town. It was only at dusk, when the place was ours, and after General Baird himself had found the dead body of Tipoo under a heap of the slain, that Herneastle and I met.

We were each attached to a party sent out by the general's orders to prevent the plunder and confusion which followed our conquest. The camp-followers committed deplorable excesses; and, worse still, the soldiers found their way, by an unguarded door, into the treasury of the palace, and loaded themselves with gold and jewels. It was in the court outside the treasury that my cousin and I met, to enforce the laws of discipline on our own soldiers. Herneastle's fiery temper had been, as I could plainly see, exasperated to a kind of frenzy by the terrible slaughter through which we had passed. He was very unfit, in my opinion, to perform the duty that had been entrusted to him.

There was riot and confusion enough in the treasury, but no violence that I saw. The men (if I may use such an expression) disgraced themselves good humouredly. All sorts of rough jests and catchwords were bandied about among them; and the story of the Diamond turned up again unexpectedly, in the form of a mischievous joke. "Who's got the Moonstone?" was the rallying cry which perpetually caused the plundering, as soon as it was stopped in one place, to break out in another. While I was still vainly trying to establish order, I heard a frightful yelling on the other side of the courtyard, and at once ran towards the cries, in dread of finding some new outbreak of the pillage in that direction.

I got to an open door, and saw the bodies of two Indians (by their dress, as I guessed, officers of the palace) lying across the entrance, dead.

A cry inside hurried me into a room, which appeared to serve as an armoury. A third Indian, mortally wounded, was sinking at the feet of a man whose back was towards me. The man turned at the instant when I came in, and I saw John Herneastle, with a torch in one hand, and a dagger dripping with blood in the other. A stone, set like a pommel, in the end of the dagger's handle, flashed in the torchlight, as he turned on me, like a gleam of fire. The dying Indian sank to his knees, pointed to the dagger in Herneastle's hand, and said, in his native language:—"The Moonstone will have its vengeance yet on you and yours!" He spoke those words, and fell dead on the floor.

Before I could stir in the matter, the men who had followed me across the court-yard crowded in. My cousin rushed to meet them, like a madman. "Clear the room!" he shouted to me, "and set a guard on the door!" The men fell back as he threw himself on them with his torch and his dagger. I put two sentinels of my own company, on whom I could rely, to keep the door. Through the remainder of the night, I saw no more of my cousin.

Early in the morning, the plunder still going on, General Baird announced publicly by beat of drum, that any thief detected in the fact, be he whom he might, should be hung. The provost-marshal was in attendance, to prove that the general was in earnest; and in the throng that followed the proclamation, Herneastle and I met again.

He held out his hand, as usual, and said, "Good morning."

I waited before I gave him my hand in return.

"Tell me first," I said, "how the Indian in the armoury met his death, and what those last words meant, when he pointed to the dagger in your hand."

"The Indian met his death, as I suppose, by a mortal wound," said Herneastle. "What his last words meant I know no more than you do."

I looked at him narrowly. His frenzy of the previous day had all calmed down. I determined to give him another chance.

"Is that all you have to tell me?" I asked.

He answered, "That is all."

I turned my back on him; and we have not spoken since.

IV.

I beg it to be understood that what I write here about my cousin (unless some necessity should arise for making it public) is for the information of the family only. Hernecastle has said nothing that can justify me in speaking to our commanding officer. He has been taunted more than once about the Diamond, by those who recollect his angry outbreak before the assault; but, as may easily be imagined, his own remembrance of the circumstances under which I surprised him in the armoury has been enough to keep him silent. It is reported that he means to exchange into another regiment, avowedly for the purpose of separating himself from me.

Whether this be true or not, I cannot prevail upon myself to become his accuser—and I think with good reason. If I made the matter public, I have no evidence but moral evidence to bring forward. I have not only no proof that he killed the two men at the door; I cannot even declare that he killed the third man inside—for I cannot say that my own eyes saw the deed committed. It is true that I heard the dying Indian's words; but if those words were pronounced to be the ravings of delirium, how could I contradict the assertion from my own knowledge? Let our relatives, on either side, form their own opinion on what I have written, and decide for themselves whether the aversion I now feel towards this man is well or ill founded.

Although I attach no sort of credit to the fantastic Indian legend of the gem, I must acknowledge, before I conclude, that I am influenced by a certain superstition of my own in this matter. It is my conviction, or my delusion, no matter which, that crime brings its own fatality with it. I am not only persuaded of Hernecastle's guilt; I am even fanciful enough to believe that he will live to regret it, if he keeps the Diamond; and that others will live to regret taking it from him, if he gives the Diamond away.

The Story.

FIRST PERIOD. THE LOSS OF THE DIAMOND (1848).

The Events related by Gabriel Betteredge, house-steward in the service of Julia, Lady Verinder.

CHAPTER I.

IN the first part of Robinson Crusoe, at page one hundred and twenty-nine, you will find it thus written:

"Now I saw, though too late, the Folly of beginning a Work before we count the Cost, and before we judge rightly of our own Strength to go through with it."

Only yesterday, I opened my Robinson Crusoe

at that place. Only this morning (May twenty-first, eighteen hundred and fifty), came my lady's nephew, Mr. Franklin Blake, and held a short conversation with me, as follows:

"Betteredge," says Mr. Franklin, "I have been to the lawyer's about some family matters; and, among other things, we have been talking of the loss of the Indian Diamond, in my aunt's house in Yorkshire, two years since. The lawyer thinks, as I think, that the whole story ought, in the interests of truth, to be placed on record in writing—and the sooner the better."

Not perceiving his drift yet, and thinking it always desirable, for the sake of peace and quietness, to be on the lawyer's side, I said I thought so too. Mr. Franklin went on.

"In this matter of the Diamond," he said, "the characters of innocent people have suffered under suspicion already—as you know. The memories of innocent people may suffer, hereafter, for want of a record of the facts to which those who come after us can appeal. There can be no doubt that this strange family story of ours ought to be told. And I think, Betteredge, the lawyer and I together have hit on the right way of telling it."

Very satisfactory to both of them, no doubt. But I failed to see what I myself had to do with it, so far.

"We have certain events to relate," Mr. Franklin proceeded; "and we have certain persons concerned in those events who are capable of relating them. Starting from these plain facts, the lawyer's idea is that we should all write the story of the Moonstone in turn—as far as our own personal experience extends, and no farther. We must begin by showing how the Diamond first fell into the hands of my uncle Hernecastle, when he was serving in India fifty years since. This prefatory narrative I have already got by me in the form of an old family paper, which relates the necessary particulars on the authority of an eye-witness. The next thing to do is to tell how the Diamond found its way into my aunt's house in Yorkshire, two years since, and how it came to be lost in little more than twelve hours afterwards. Nobody knows as much as you do, Betteredge, about what went on in the house at that time. So you must take the pen in hand, and start the story."

In those terms I was informed of what my personal concern was with the matter of the Diamond. If you are curious to know what course I took under the circumstances, I beg to inform you that I did what you would probably have done in my place. I modestly declared myself to be quite unequal to the task imposed upon me—and I privately felt, all the time, that I was quite clever enough to perform it, if I only gave my own abilities a fair chance. Mr. Franklin, I imagine, must have seen my private sentiments in my face. He declined to believe in my modesty; and he insisted on giving my abilities a fair chance.

Two hours have passed since Mr. Franklin

left me. As soon as his back was turned, I went to my writing-desk to start the story. There I have sat helpless (in spite of my abilities) ever since; seeing what Robinson Crusoe saw, as quoted above—namely, the folly of beginning a work before we count the cost, and before we judge rightly of our own strength to go through with it. Please to remember, I opened the book by accident, at that bit, only the day before I rashly undertook the business now in hand; and, allow me to ask—If *that* isn't prophecy, what is?

I am not superstitious; I have read a heap of books in my time; I am a scholar in my own way. Though turned seventy, I possess an active memory, and legs to correspond. You are not to take it, if you please, as the saying of an ignorant man, when I express my opinion that such a book as Robinson Crusoe never was written, and never will be written again. I have tried that book for years—generally in combination with a pipe of tobacco—and I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are bad—Robinson Crusoe. When I want advice—Robinson Crusoe. In past times, when my wife plagued me; in present times, when I have had a drop too much—Robinson Crusoe. I have worn out six stout Robinson Crusoes with hard work in my service. On my lady's last birthday, she gave me a seventh. I took a drop too much on the strength of it; and Robinson Crusoe put me right again. Price four shillings and sixpence, bound in blue, with a picture into the bargain.

Still, this don't look much like starting the story of the Diamond—does it? I seem to be wandering off in search of Lord knows what, Lord knows where. We will take a new sheet of paper, if you please, and begin over again, with my best respects to you.

CHAPTER II.

I SPOKE of my lady a line or two back. Now the Diamond could never have been in our house, where it was lost, if it had not been made a present of to my lady's daughter; and my lady's daughter would never have been in existence to have the present, if it had not been for my lady, who (with pain and travail) produced her into the world. Consequently, if we begin with my lady, we are pretty sure of beginning far enough back. And that, let me tell you, when you have got such a job as mine in hand, is a real comfort at starting.

If you know anything of the fashionable world, you have heard tell of the three beautiful Miss Hervecastles. Miss Adelaide; Miss Caroline; and Miss Julia—this last being the youngest and the best of the three sisters, in my opinion; and I had opportunities of judging, as you shall presently see. I went into the service of the old lord, their father (thank God, we have got nothing to do with *him*, in this business of the Diamond; he had the longest tongue and the shortest temper of any man, high or low, I ever met with)—I say,

I went into the service of the old lord, as page-boy in waiting on the three honourable young ladies, at the age of fifteen years. There I lived, till Miss Julia married the late Sir John Verinder. An excellent man, who only wanted somebody to manage him; and, between ourselves, he found somebody to do it; and what is more, he thrived on it, and grew fat on it, and lived happy and died easy on it, dating from the day when my lady took him to church to be married, to the day when she relieved him of his last breath, and closed his eyes for ever.

I have omitted to state that I went with the bride to the bride's husband's house and lands down here. "Sir John," she said, "I can't do without Gabriel Betteredge." "My lady," says Sir John, "I can't do without him, either." That was his way with her—and that was how I went into his service. It was all one to me where I went, so long as my mistress and I were together.

Seeing that my lady took an interest in the out-of-door work, and the farms, and such-like, I took an interest in them too—with all the more reason that I was a small farmer's seventh son myself. My lady got me put under the bailiff, and I did my best, and gave satisfaction, and got promotion accordingly. Some years later, on the Monday as it might be, my lady says, "Sir John, your bailiff is a stupid old man. Pension him liberally, and let Gabriel Betteredge have his place." On the Tuesday as it might be, Sir John says, "My lady, the bailiff is pensioned liberally; and Gabriel Betteredge has got his place." You hear more than enough of married people living together miserably. Here is an example to the contrary. Let it be a warning to some of you, and an encouragement to others. In the mean time, I will go on with my story.

Well, there I was in clover, you will say. Placed in a position of trust and honour, with a little cottage of my own to live in, with my rounds on the estate to occupy me in the morning, and my accounts in the afternoon, and my pipe and my Robinson Crusoe in the evening—what more could I possibly want to make me happy? Remember what Adam wanted when he was alone in the Garden of Eden; and if you don't blame it in Adam, don't blame it in me.

The woman I fixed my eye on, was the woman who kept house for me at my cottage. Her name was Selina Goby. I agree with the late William Cobbett about picking a wife. See that she chews her food well, and sets her foot down firmly on the ground when she walks, and you're all right. Selina Goby was all right in both these respects, which was one reason for marrying her. I had another reason, likewise, entirely of my own discovering. Selina, being a single woman, made me pay so much a week for her board and services. Selina, being my wife, couldn't charge for her board, and would have to give me her services for nothing. That was the point of view I looked at it from. Economy—with a dash of love. I put it to my

mistress, as in duty bound, just as I had put it to myself.

"I have been turning Selina Goby over in my mind," I said, "and I think, my lady, it will be cheaper to marry her than to keep her."

My lady burst out laughing, and said she didn't know which to be most shocked at—my language or my principles. Some joke tickled her, I suppose, of the sort that you can't take unless you are a person of quality. Understanding nothing myself but that I was free to put it next to Selina, I went and put it accordingly. And what did Selina say? Lord! how little you must know of women, if you ask that. Of course she said Yes.

As my time drew nearer, and there got to be talk of my having a new coat for the ceremony, my mind began to misgive me. I have compared notes with other men as to what they felt while they were in my interesting situation; and they have all acknowledged that, about a week before it happened, they privately wished themselves out of it. I went a trifle further than that myself; I actually rose up, as it were, and tried to get out of it. Not for nothing! I was too just a man to expect she would let me off for nothing. Compensation to the woman when the man gets out of it, is one of the laws of England. In obedience to the laws, and after turning it over carefully in my mind, I offered Selina Goby a feather bed and fifty shillings to be off the bargain. You will hardly believe it, but it is nevertheless true—she was fool enough to refuse.

After that it was all over with me, of course. I got the new coat as cheap as I could, and I went through all the rest of it as cheap as I could. We were not a happy couple, and not a miserable couple. We were six of one and half a dozen of the other. How it was I don't understand, but we always seemed to be getting, with the best of motives, in one another's way. When I wanted to go up-stairs, there was my wife coming down; or when my wife wanted to go down, there was I coming up. That is married life, according to my experience of it.

After five years of misunderstandings on the stairs, it pleased an all-wise Providence to relieve us of each other by taking my wife. I was left with my little girl Penelope, and with no other child. Shortly afterwards Sir John died, and my lady was left with her little girl Miss Rachel, and no other child. I have written to very poor purpose of my lady, if you require to be told that my little Penelope was taken care of, under my good mistress's own eye, and was sent to school, and taught, and made a sharp girl, and promoted, when old enough, to be Miss Rachel's own maid.

As for me, I went on with my business as bailiff year after year up to Christmas, 1847, when there came a change in my life. On that day, my lady invited herself to a cup of tea alone with me in my cottage. She remarked that, reckoning from the year when I started as page-boy in the time of the old lord, I had been more than fifty years in her service, and she put into my hands a beautiful waistcoat of wool that she

had worked herself, to keep me warm in the bitter winter weather.

I received this magnificent present quite at a loss to find words to thank my mistress with for the honour she had done me. To my great astonishment, it turned out, however, that the waistcoat was not an honour, but a bribe. My lady had discovered that I was getting old before I had discovered it myself, and she had come to my cottage to wheedle me (if I may use such an expression) into giving up my hard out-of-door work as bailiff, and taking my ease for the rest of my days as steward in the house. I made as good a fight of it against the indignity of taking my ease as I could. But my mistress knew the weak side of me; she put it as a favour to herself. The dispute between us ended, after that, in my wiping my eyes, like an old fool, with my new woollen waistcoat, and saying I would think about it.

The perturbation in my mind, in regard to thinking about it, being truly dreadful after my lady had gone away, I applied the remedy which I have never yet found to fail me in cases of doubt and emergency. I smoked a pipe and took a turn at Robinson Crusoe. Before I had occupied myself with that extraordinary book five minutes, I came on a comforting bit (page one hundred and fifty-eight), as follows: "To-day we love, what to-morrow we hate." I saw my way clear directly. To-day I was all for continuing to be farm-bailiff; to-morrow, on the authority of Robinson Crusoe, I should be all the other way. Take myself to-morrow while in to-morrow's humour, and the thing was done. My mind being relieved in this manner, I went to sleep that night in the character of Lady Verinder's farm-bailiff, and I woke up the next morning in the character of Lady Verinder's house-steward. All quite comfortable, and all through Robinson Crusoe!

My daughter Penelope has just looked over my shoulder to see what I have done so far. She remarks that it is beautifully written, and every word of it true. But she points out one objection. She says what I have done so far isn't in the least what I was wanted to do. I am asked to tell the story of the Diamond, and, instead of that, I have been telling the story of my own self. Curious, and quite beyond me to account for. I wonder whether the gentlemen who make a business and a living out of writing books ever find their own selves getting in the way of their subjects, like me? If they do, I can feel for them. In the mean time, here is another false start. What's to be done now? Nothing that I know of, except for you to keep your temper, and for me to begin it all over again for the third time.

CHAPTER III.

THE question of how I am to start the story properly I have tried to settle in two ways. First, by scratching my head, which led to nothing. Second, by consulting my daughter Penelope, which has resulted in an entirely new idea.

Penelope's notion is that I should set down

what happened, regularly day by day, beginning with the day when we got the news that Mr. Franklin Blake was expected on a visit to the house. When you come to fix your memory with a date in this way, it is wonderful what your memory will pick up for you upon that compulsion. The only difficulty is to fetch out the dates, in the first place. This Penelope offers to do for me by looking into her own diary, which she was taught to keep when she was at school, and which she has gone on keeping ever since. In answer to an improvement on this notion, devised by myself, namely, that she should tell the story instead of me, out of her own diary, Penelope observes, with a fierce look and a red face, that her journal is for her own private eye, and that no living creature shall ever know what is in it but herself. When I inquire what this means, Penelope says, "Fiddlestick!" I say, Sweethearts.

Beginning, then, on Penelope's plan, I beg to mention that I was specially called one Wednesday morning into my lady's own sitting-room, the date being the twenty-fourth of May, eighteen hundred and forty-eight.

"Gabriel," says my lady, "here is news that will surprise you. Franklin Blake has come back from abroad. He has been staying with his father in London, and he is coming to us tomorrow to stop till next month, and keep Rachel's birthday."

If I had had a hat in my hand, nothing but respect would have prevented me from throwing that hat up to the ceiling. I had not seen Mr. Franklin since he was a boy, living along with us in this house. He was, out of all sight (as I remembered him), the nicest boy that ever spun a top or broke a window. Miss Rachel, who was present, and to whom I made that remark, observed, in return, that *she* remembered him as the most atrocious tyrant that ever tortured a doll, and the hardest driver of an exhausted little girl in string harness that England could produce. "I burn with indignation, and I ache with fatigue," was the way Miss Rachel summed it up, "when I think of Franklin Blake."

Hearing what I now tell you, you will naturally ask how it was that Mr. Franklin should have passed all the years, from the time when he was a boy to the time when he was a man, out of his own country? I answer, because his father had the misfortune to be next heir to a Dukedom, and not to be able to prove it.

In two words, this was how the thing happened:

My lady's eldest sister married the celebrated Mr. Blake—equally famous for his great riches, and his great suit at law. How many years he went on worrying the tribunals of his country to turn out the Duke in possession, and to put himself in the Duke's place—how many lawyers' purses he filled to bursting, and how many otherwise harmless people he set by the ears together disputing whether he was right or wrong—is more by a great deal than I can reckon up. His wife died, and two of his three children died, before the tribunals could make up their minds to show him the door and take no more

of his money. When it was all over, and the Duke in possession was left in possession, Mr. Blake discovered that the only way of being even with his country for the manner in which it had treated him, was not to let his country have the honour of educating his son. "How can I trust my native institutions," was the form in which he put it, "after the way in which my native institutions have behaved to me?" Add to this, that Mr. Blake disliked all boys, his own included, and you will admit that it could only end in one way. Master Franklin was taken from us in England, and was sent to institutions which his father *could* trust, in that superior country, Germany; Mr. Blake himself, you will observe, remaining snug in England, to improve his fellow-countrymen in the Parliament House, and to publish a statement on the subject of the Duke in possession, which has remained an unfinished statement from that day to this.

There! Thank God, that's told! Neither you nor I need trouble our heads any more about Mr. Blake, senior. Leave him to the Dukedom; and let you and I stick to the Diamond.

The Diamond takes us back to Mr. Franklin, who was the innocent means of bringing that unlucky jewel into the house.

Our nice boy didn't forget us after he went abroad. He wrote every now and then; sometimes to my lady, sometimes to Miss Rachel, and sometimes to me. We had had a transaction together, before he left, which consisted in his borrowing of me a ball of string, a four-bladed knife, and seven and sixpence in money—the colour of which last I have not seen, and never expect to see, again. His letters to me chiefly related to borrowing more. I heard, however, from my lady, how he got on abroad, as he grew in years and stature. After he had learnt what the institutions of Germany could teach him, he gave the French a turn next, and the Italians a turn after that. They made him among them a sort of universal genius, as well as I could understand it. He wrote a little; he painted a little; he sang and played and composed a little—borrowing, as I suspect, in all these cases, just as he had borrowed from me. His mother's fortune (seven hundred a year) fell to him when he came of age, and ran through him, as it might be through a sieve. The more money he had, the more he wanted: there was a hole in Mr. Franklin's pocket that nothing would sew up. Wherever he went, the lively easy way of him made him welcome. He lived here, there, and everywhere; his address (as he used to put it himself) being, "Post-office, Europe—to be left till called for." Twice over, he made up his mind to come back to England and see us; and twice over (saving your presence), some unmentionable woman stood in the way and stopped him. His third attempt succeeded, as you know already from what my lady told me. On Tuesday, the twenty-fifth of May, we were to see for the first time what our nice boy had grown to be as a man. He came of good blood; he had a high courage; and he was five-and-

twenty years of age, by our reckoning. Now you know as much of Mr. Franklin Blake as I did—before Mr. Franklin Blake came down to our house.

The Thursday was as fine a summer's day as ever you saw: and my lady and Miss Rachel (not expecting Mr. Franklin till dinner-time) drove out to lunch with some friends in the neighbourhood.

When they were gone, I went and had a look at the bedroom which had been got ready for our guest, and saw that all was straight. Then, being butler in my lady's establishment as well as steward (at my own particular request, mind, and because it vexed me to see anybody but myself in possession of the key of the late Sir John's cellar)—then, I say, I fetched up some of our famous Latour claret, and set it in the warm summer air to take off the chill before dinner. Concluding to set myself in the warm summer air next—seeing that what is good for old claret is equally good for old age—I took up my beehive chair to go out into the back court, when I was stopped by hearing a sound like the soft beating of a drum on the terrace in front of my lady's residence.

Going round to the terrace, I found three mahogany-coloured Indians, in white linen frocks and trousers, looking up at the house.

The Indians, as I saw on looking closer, had small hand-drums slung in front of them. Behind them stood a little delicate-looking light-haired English boy carrying a bag. I judged the fellows to be strolling conjurers, and the boy with the bag to be carrying the tools of their trade. One of the three, who spoke English, and who exhibited, I must own, the most elegant manners, presently informed me that my judgment was right. He requested permission to show his tricks in the presence of the lady of the house.

Now I am not a sour old man. I am generally all for amusement, and the last person in the world to distrust another person because he happens to be a few shades darker than myself. But the best of us have our weaknesses—and my weakness, when I know a family plate-basket to be out on a pantry table, is to be instantly reminded of that basket by the sight of a strolling stranger whose manners are superior to my own. I accordingly informed the Indian that the lady of the house was out; and I warned him and his party off the premises. He made me a beautiful bow in return; and he and his party went off the premises. On my side, I returned to my beehive chair, and set myself down on the sunny side of the court, and fell (if the truth must be owned), not exactly into a sleep, but into the next best thing to it.

I was roused up by my daughter Penelope, running out at me as if the house was on fire. What do you think she wanted? She wanted to have the three Indian jugglers instantly taken up; for this reason, namely, that they knew who was coming from London to visit us, and that they meant some mischief to Mr. Franklin Blake.

Mr. Franklin's name roused me. I opened my eyes, and made my girl explain herself.

It appeared that Penelope had just come from our lodge, where she had been having a gossip with the lodge-keeper's daughter. The two girls had seen the Indians pass out, after I had warned them off, followed by their little boy. Taking it into their heads that the boy was ill used by the foreigners—for no reason that I could discover, except that he was pretty and delicate-looking—the two girls had stolen along the inner side of the hedge between us and the road, and had watched the proceedings of the foreigners on the outer side. Those proceedings resulted in the performance of the following extraordinary tricks.

They first looked up the road, and down the road, and made sure that they were alone. Then they all three faced about, and stared hard in the direction of our house. Then they jabbered and disputed in their own language, and looked at each other like men in doubt. Then they all turned to their little English boy, as if they expected him to help them. And then the chief Indian, who spoke English, said to the boy, "Hold out your hand."

On hearing those dreadful words, my daughter Penelope said she didn't know what prevented her heart from flying straight out of her. I thought privately that it might have been her stays. All I said, however, was, "You make my flesh creep." (*Nota bene*: women like these little compliments.)

Well, when the Indian said "Hold out your hand," the boy shrunk back, and shook his head, and said he didn't like it. The Indian thereupon asked him (not at all unkindly) whether he would like to be sent back to London, and left where they had found him, sleeping in an empty basket in a market—a hungry, ragged, and forsaken little boy. This, it seems, ended the difficulty. The little chap unwillingly held out his hand. Upon that, the Indian took a bottle from his bosom, and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink, into the palm of the boy's hand. The Indian—first touching the boy's head, and making signs over it in the air—then said, "Look." The boy became quite stiff, and stood like a statue, looking into the ink in the hollow of his hand.

(So far, it seemed to me to be juggling, accompanied by a foolish waste of ink. I was beginning to feel sleepy again, when Penelope's next words stirred me up.)

The Indians looked up the road and down the road once more—and then the chief Indian said these words to the boy: "See the English gentleman from foreign parts."

The boy said, "I see him."

The Indian said, "Is it on the road to this house, and on no other, that the English gentleman will travel to-day?"

The boy said, "It is on the road to this house, and on no other, that the English gentleman will travel to-day."

The Indian put a second question—after waiting a little first. He said: "Has the English gentleman got it about him?"

The boy answered—also, after waiting a little first—"Yes."

The Indian put a third and last question: "Will the English gentleman come here, as he has promised to come, at the close of day?"

The boy said, "I can't tell."

The Indian asked why.

The boy said, "I am tired. The mist rises in my head, and puzzles me. I can see no more to-day."

With that, the catechism ended. The chief Indian said something in his own language to the other two, pointing to the boy, and pointing towards the town, in which (as we afterwards discovered) they were lodged. He then, after making more signs on the boy's head, blew on his forehead, and so woke him up with a start. After that, they all went on their way towards the town, and the girls saw them no more.

Most things, they say, have a moral, if you only look for it. What was the moral of this?

The moral was, as I thought: First, that the chief juggler had heard Mr. Franklin's arrival talked of among the servants out-of-doors, and saw his way to making a little money by it. Second, that he and his men and boy (with a view to making the said money) meant to hang about till they saw my lady drive home, and then to come back, and foretel Mr. Franklin's arrival by magic. Third, that Penelope had heard them rehearsing their hocus-pocus, like actors rehearsing a play. Fourth, that I should do well to have an eye, that evening, on the plate-basket. Fifth, that Penelope would do well to cool down, and leave me, her father, to doze off again in the sun.

That appeared to me to be the sensible view. If you know anything of the ways of young women, you won't be surprised to hear that Penelope wouldn't take it. The moral of the thing was serious, according to my daughter. She particularly reminded me of the Indian's third question, Has the English gentleman got It about him? "Oh, father!" says Penelope, clasping her hands, "don't joke about this! What does 'It' mean?"

"We'll ask Mr. Franklin, my dear," I said, "if you can wait till Mr. Franklin comes." I winked to show I meant that in joke. Penelope took it quite seriously. My girl's earnestness tickled me. "What on earth should Mr. Franklin know about it?" I inquired. "Ask him," says Penelope. "And see whether *he* thinks it a laughing matter, too." With that parting shot, my daughter left me.

I settled it with myself, when she was gone, that I really would ask Mr. Franklin—mainly to set Penelope's mind at rest. What was said between us, when I did ask him, later on that same day, you will find set out fully in its proper place. But as I don't wish to raise your expectations and then disappoint them, I will take leave to warn you here—before we go any further—that you won't find the ghost

of a joke in our conversation on the subject of the jugglers. To my great surprise, Mr. Franklin, like Penelope, took the thing seriously. How seriously, you will understand when I tell you that, in his opinion, "It" meant the Moonstone.

RAILWAY THOUGHTS.

THE pursuit of health is like hunting the hare: the further you run, and the faster you run after her, the more you enjoy and benefit by the sport. I hold that there is more health to be derived by continuous travelling than by merely shifting your place of abode. Thus, if I occupy a week in going to John o'Groat's house and back, I derive more benefit than if I performed the journey in a couple of days—supposing that to be possible—and spent the other five at John o'Groat's house. There are, so to speak, elements in railway travelling highly conducive to health, more especially to the health of those whose pursuits are habitually in-door and sedentary. Those elements are excitement, variety, an occasional sense of danger, followed by a sense of safety—though this does not always follow—and fresh air. To the sedentary man, who has been spending months, as it were, in his easy-chair, there is a great amount of exhilaration in being suddenly transferred to an express train. The very bustle of the railway terminus is a taste of new life. It is the first glass or two of wine at dinner. When the train is at full speed rattling through the green fields—champaign country as they might be called in this connexion—you become hilarious. Of course, a man may take too much railway travelling, just as he may take too much champagne. Use and abuse are much the same in both cases. Two or three glasses of champagne—perfect happiness; a bottle—heaviness of breathing, thickness of speech, and a disposition towards prostration. A hundred miles by rail—very pleasant, very appetising; five hundred, and you are a dead dog. Nothing but a long night's rest will restore you after that heavy bout of enjoyment on the rail. The only temporary pick-up, that has any effect whatever, is a warm bath. But there is a medium in all things, in railway travelling as well as in drinking; and I repeat, that I consider a week or so on the railway, when you don't take too much at a sitting, to be a very wholesome and enjoyable thing. It clears the lungs, circulates the blood, stimulates the brain, and raises the spirits. I believe it is a good thing to mix your airs, and to mix them well and thoroughly. "Never mix your liquors," is an exploded fallacy. I have it on the authority of a toper of many years' (unsteady) standing, that it is the greatest mistake in the world to stick to one liquor.

"Be warned by my example, young man," says the old toper. "I have never gone to bed, what you might call sober, for fifty years; and look at me!—I can get drunk yet, and

never feel a bit the worse. I got drunk before you were born, and I'll get drunk after you're dead. And for why? Because I've always mixed my liquors. The various spirituous liquors mercifully given to man—and there are but four of them, corresponding to the elements of which all things are composed—are gin, whisky, rum, and brandy, and each is a corrective of the other. Each is a poison, I grant you, just as each component part of the atmosphere is a poison. It won't do to breathe nothing but hydrogen; it won't do to drink nothing but gin. With regard to liquor, this is my practice: I drink brandy for a week, then I correct the evil tendency of brandy by drinking gin for the next week. Following this out, I correct the gin with rum, and the rum with whisky. In a month I come round to the brandy again."

As a triumphant proof that his system is infallible, my friend points to the fact that he has seen all the companions of his life "go under" both table and turf because they were faithful to a foolish maxim, and wouldn't mix their liquors.

I am a great believer in this theory as applied to air. If you want to keep up a pleasant state of exhilaration, and preserve your health, mix your airs. For this reason I have faith in the sanitary virtues of railway travelling. John o'Groat's house or the Land's End may be all very well, but the air may not suit you at either place; and when you fix your quarters you are apt to settle down into the habitual easy-chair, and to live much as you do at home, whereas on the railway you breathe a hundred airs in a day. Believing in the inspiring influence of air with variations, I resolved to spend my month's holiday, this autumn, in travelling, and to visit as many places as possible, never spending more than a day or a couple of days at each.

So one morning, making a great effort, I dug myself from my arm-chair, and transferred my indolent and torpid person to the platform of the terminus at Euston. (There is no necessity to add "square," or to make mention of the London and North-Western Railway; for "Euston" is as big a word, and as well known a place, as London. Indeed, if you wish your luggage labelled at, say Bonar Bridge, further north than which British railway goeth not, you need only say, "Euston." For all railway purposes in these distant northern regions, the whole of the great metropolis is swallowed up in "Euston" and "King's Cross.") The very first step that one takes towards a railway journey is exciting. The cab is at the door (you see how modest I am; I don't say "carriage"), and you have not a minute to spare. Then comes that violent and bewildering collision of thoughts, to which an indolent man is always liable at such moments.

Is my luggage ready? Have I got everything I want—my railway guide, the sandwiches, the brandy-flask, my cigar-case, fuzees? Have I locked up the valuables? Have I any small change? With these unsatisfied doubts

tumbling over each other in your brain, you scramble into the cab, and the excitement begins.

There is certainly no more lively, bustling, animated, and animating scene than the terminus of a railway on the departure of an express train. It does one good even to be an on-looker; and I can imagine that a man, who has few opportunities of travel, might give himself a pleasant excitement every day, by visiting the nearest terminus to witness the excitement of others. In this ingenious manner I have enjoyed some of the delights of travelling, without the weariness of a journey, and without paying a fare. It would be difficult to describe what it is that renders this scene so invigorating. There seems to be a sort of animal magnetism at work. Every one is excited, though there is no particular cause for excitement. There are plenty of carriages, there are full five minutes to spare, and yet every individual on the platform is in an intense hurry—passing and repassing, darting at the book-stall, plunging into the refreshment-room, peeping into the carriages, glancing at the clock, asking questions of the guards (who are passing up and down with their hands slyly formed into money-boxes), giving directions to porters, shaking hands with friends over and over again, and, if addicted to tobacco, making the most desperate efforts to avoid the company of ladies. No doubt the snorting of the iron horse adds to the excitement. He is not in the least impatient to be off, and yet he seems so. And what a sense of isolation and almost sadness follows, when the train moves out of the station, and you find yourself quietly seated with three or four companions! Those whom you have left on the platform feel no less isolated and sad than you, who are gliding away, with the elements of all the past bustle gathered into silence. I am inclined to think that something new might be said even on such a hackneyed, every-hour subject as a railway journey from London to Liverpool, if the thoughtful passenger had the courage to reveal his thoughts and his feelings. I often wonder if the people who sit in the same compartment with me are thinking what I am thinking, feeling what I am feeling. Much as I am benefited by railway travelling, I will confess at once that I never enter a railway carriage without making up my mind for sudden death. In an express train I can never for any length of time abstract myself from thoughts of danger. And yet I am not agitated physically by this fear. My heart beats as usual; there is no pallor on my cheek, no moisture on my skin. I can speak without a quaver in my voice; I can smoke placidly. Nevertheless, at every variation of sound and motion, every shriek of the whistle, every plunge into the darkness of a tunnel, every swaying, swinging rattle over the points at a junction, thick-coming fancies of danger rush through my brain and trouble me vaguely. I look into the faces of my fellow-passengers for some indication that they are feeling as I feel. I can

see none. But, as I am sure that I betray nothing to them, I reason that they, like myself, may be suffering without showing it.

Exhilarating and refreshing as I find railway travelling to be in its result upon my health and spirits, there are variations in sound and motion attending an express train at full speed that cause me, for the time being, much uneasiness. How does it happen that after travelling smoothly and steadily for a certain distance, the carriage suddenly begins to oscillate, that the wheels begin to "bump, bump," as if the axles had given way, that every now and then a "birring" noise occurs, that the carriage sinks first on one side and then on the other for a short distance, as if it were going to roll over? These may not be indications of danger, but I shrewdly suspect that the travelling public think they are; and I am sure it would be conferring a great favour upon the travelling public, and tend greatly to relieve their minds and make them more comfortable during their journeys, if some person who has a railway engineer's experience of all such disturbing symptoms, would tell us precisely what they mean. Are they danger signals, or not? As a timid railway traveller—though, I suspect, no more timid than thousands of my neighbours—I want to know what circumstance will, and what circumstance will not, justify me in breaking that circular piece of glass, turning the handle, and signalling to the driver to stop. Shall I be warranted when that unaccountable bumping goes on for a full hour? when I am being flung about in my seat as if I were being rolled down hill in a barrel? when the carriage is filled with the smoke and the smell of burning wood? when red-hot sparks are fairly raining on the heap of tarpaulin-covered luggage on the roof? If there is no danger whatever indicated by these alarming signs and wonders of railway travelling, only let us know and be assured of it on the best authority.

I have a suspicion that these questions would have been frequently asked before now but for the unwillingness of railway travellers to confess fears which might prove to be groundless. When travellers get safely to their destination, they forget the alarms of the journey, and neglect the resolution which they made on the way to write to the Times. It is only when an accident occurs that passengers have courage enough to declare, after the fact, that they felt something was going wrong.

I wonder if there is any one railway functionary who has a full knowledge of *all* the ways and habits of a train? I am certain that the engine-driver knows very little of what occurs behind him. The engine is subject to little variation of motion. Its oscillation is a continuance of short sharp jerks, as regular as the ticking of a watch. If the road be clear, and the metals sound, nothing can happen to the engine except a collision. But the long trains that swing behind it are, as we know, apt to run off the line, tear up the rails, and force the points from their proper position. Would it be too

much to ask the railway authorities to draw up a code of railway engineering, which should not only be a guide to those who drive engines and manage railway traffic, but also afford every necessary information to travellers? Very few know what degree of safety is ensured by the principle of running upon rails. There may be none at all. We take the railway upon blind trust. People have travelled upon railways without being killed or maimed: others may do the same. I should not wonder if, on investigating the subject, it were found that it is not safe *at all* to travel at the rate of forty miles an hour, and that it is quite as foolhardy to enter an express train as it is to trust oneself to the shoulders of Blondin when he walks across the high rope. Let me recommend the subject to the consideration of the Social Science Congress.

The perils which I imagine on the journey between Euston, London, and Lime-street, Liverpool, present themselves so uniformly, that I think they may be accounted for. My experience is this: That the long run at express speed from Euston to Rugby is invariably easy and pleasant. Noswinging or jolting, nor any unpleasant motion whatever. But towards the end of the journey the engine appears to get fiercely impatient, and tears along at an alarming rate. I never pass the points at Huyton, three miles from the Lime-street tunnel, without feeling that there is going to be a smash—that we shall swing off the line. Again, on returning, all goes smoothly and steadily until the train leaves Rugby for its final run to Euston. Here the engine goes mad again, and in the neighbourhood of Tring I sit breathlessly expecting destruction. I have heard engine-drivers talk about "up hill" and "down hill," in reference to this part of the line. Is it down hill from Tring, and is it safe to go down hill at such a fearful rate? I could name many "bits of road," as the drivers have it, where the engines invariably go mad. On the Great Northern, between Doncaster and Peterborough: two hours of breathless holding on by arm-strap and cushion. Between Watford and King's Cross—ditto. The madness of the Midland trains, as the public know, has driven passengers to break their journey to escape the risks of breaking their necks. I have often felt inclined to do this, but did not like to confess my alarm.

The engine-driver of Mugby Junction, who, I am in a position to state, bears his fame with that quiet modesty which is ever characteristic of real worth, said that there was an art in driving; that though starting an engine was as simple and easy a matter as drawing a drop of gin, driving well and steadily was quite another affair. I have taken some pains to ascertain the correctness of this dictum, and I find that there is at least a great difference in the performance of engines. Whether this is owing to the engines themselves, or to the drivers of them, I am unable to say; but I have noticed frequently that a change of engine, without any other change in the train, such as

the addition or detachment of carriages, has made a sensible difference in the motion of the train. One engine (or engine-driver, it may be) jolts and jerks and swings you about; another comes on, and you go along smoothly. Why cannot we always go along smoothly?

Habitual travellers on the London and North-Western Railway are apt to say that the journey from Euston to Lime-street presents no features of interest. Now, my experience warrants me in saying that there is at least one feature which never fails to interest the traveller. There are places on the line whose names are household words, places associated with great names and great deeds. Here is Harrow, for example, where so many famous poets and illustrious statesmen went to school; Rugby, another famous seat of learning; Mugby, also, known to the world for its stale buns. The names of Oxford, Tamworth, and Chester might awaken historical thoughts to beguile the tedium of the journey. But the place of interest, par excellence, is none of these. The magic name which rouses every traveller when it is uttered, which even engages his mind before it comes in sight, is RUGELEY. I have travelled very many times between London and Liverpool, but I never once passed this place without thinking, or being reminded, of it. Second class invariably points to the square-towered church in the distance, and says, "Yonder's Rugeley, where Palmer murdered Cook." First class, being more dignified and less communicative, is not betrayed into any remark; but as the train approaches the place you see that he is watching for something. Going towards Liverpool it is always "eyes left" in passing Rugeley. Second class moralises aloud; first class moralises in thought: "I wonder if he ever went to that church; if he prayed there when he was giving Cook the poison. What must have been his feelings when the clergyman said, 'Thou shalt do no murder;' when he came to say, 'From battle and murder and sudden death, good Lord, deliver us'?"

"Here's the station," continues second class. "I dare say he and Cook have often stood there together, waiting for the train to Doncaster races."

"Ah," says another second class, "many's the time they've taken a glass together in that refreshment-room."

"And here's Stafford, where he was tried and hanged."

And then comes up the controversy as to whether or not it was strychnine he used.

There is nothing which interests mankind so deeply as a murder. It is mere cant in superior people to deplore the predilection of the lower classes for that part of the newspaper which contains the record of crime. Superior people are quite as eager as their inferiors to turn to the history of dark deeds. It is not surprising. Murder is the most awful of all crimes. The most vulgar deed of this kind derives importance from the sacredness which we all attach to human life. The com-

monest outcast, whose throat is cut darkly and mysteriously in some low lodging-house, receives from the awful circumstance of the crime something of the halo which surrounds the martyr. Nothing else that could happen to such a person could ever elevate him to the importance which he receives from being murdered. The murder of Mr. O'Connor by Mrs. Manning is by no means a burlesque of the murder of King Duncan by Lady Macbeth. It is the same thing. The vulgar surroundings of the cellar at Bermondsey do not render the deed less awful or less tragic. In both cases it is the violent taking of a sacred life. There is something solemn in the very sound of the words, "the murdered man." Solemnity falls upon the voice when we say "the dead man;" but "murdered" takes a deeper, graver tone. No places are so well remembered as those where murders have been committed. Our travelling guide never fails to point out the murder-spots, and no one ever forgets those spots. They burn themselves into the mind the instant we see them. We forget all else that we have seen during the day, though we may have gazed on things the like of which we have never set eyes upon before. The murder-spot—though but a mean room, a heap of stones, or the root of a tree—remains as vivid as fire.

No wonder then that Rugeley church should arouse so much interest, since it suggests a subject which so nearly concerns all mankind. The train of thought here is shunted upon rails which carry it back to the gates of Paradise, the scene of the first murder.

And so we come to Luyton, the little station outside Liverpool, where the train always stops when Lord Derby is in it, and where a cheerful gentleman, fresh from an eight miles' ride, comes in to allay your nervousness by telling you that, in going down the tunnel, the train once broke the rope, dashed through the station wall, rushed across Lime-street, and ran full butt against St. George's Hall, Liverpool. What a relief to arrive without running full butt! How brave and jolly you become the moment you step on the platform! How well you feel!—what an appetite you have! You forget to write to the Times about the jolting, and swinging, and the madness of the engine.

TREASURE.

Two youthful schoolmates, blithe and free,
Wander'd together by the sea.

Said one, "My hopes are high as heaven;
To me the Future shall be given."

Said his companion, "I will stand
Among the foremost of the land."

"My fame shall thread the maze of men,
And lightnings quiver from my pen."

They met again in forty years,
And told their boyish hopes and fears.

The one had set his heart on gold,
And found it—growing frail and old.

The other, living fuller life,
Had fled the haunts of worldly strife,

And fill'd his soul with purpose high
And wisdom of the earth and sky,

But had not gather'd golden store,
To scare ill-fortune from his door;

Nothing but Courage, Hope, and Faith,
And Love, the conqueror of Death.

The rich man, with a mournful smile,
Said to the poor, and sigh'd the while:

"Oh, friend! thou'st dream'd thy life away,
And now that thou art old and grey,

"Hast not a penny for thine age,
Or for thy children's heritage."

The poor man cheerily replied:
"What matters? Life and joy abide.

"My children, sporting in the sun,
Can do at least what I have done.

"I've had my pleasure as I went,
And known the riches of content.

"Thou hast thy treasures—I have mine—
My heart my judge, men's verdict thine.

"But, friend, who'st chosen other ways
Than those I've trodden all my days,

"When comes the hour, as come it must,
When thou shalt mingle with the dust,

"Whose treasures shall the best endure—
Those of the rich man or the poor?"

"Thine cease at portals of the grave,
Not even their shadow can'st thou save!

"But what I've won with heart endeavour
Is mine for ever and for ever.

"I take it with me through the tomb,
And find it when I pass the gloom!"

SIR JOHN'S TROUBLES.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

WANTED A GOVERNESS. Must be a Roman Catholic. A French lady with a good knowledge of English preferred. Unexceptional references required; and a liberal salary given. Apply by letter to J. M., the Oriental Club, Hanover-square, W.

"What a very singular place for a governess to apply at," said Lady Milson to her husband, as she read the above advertisement in the Morning Post at breakfast one morning. "What a curious place for a governess to apply at. Why, the initials are the same as your own, John."

It was fortunate for Sir John that two walls of paper intervened between him and his wife, for he sat reading the Homeward Mail, and Lady Milson the Morning Post, as they sipped their tea and made inroads into their toast. Had it been otherwise, his better-half would have certainly seen that there was something wrong with her lord and master. Poor Sir John's troubles had begun, as he thought, in earnest,

but as yet it was only the beginning of evil. He had written to tell his old friend that he would do all he could for his daughters when they arrived, and would have a home ready for them by the time they arrived. But what to do, or how to do it, he knew no more than a babe unborn. Already he had been more than suspected of wanting a house for some person for whom he ought not to find either house or home. He had gone to a West-end house-agent, and told him that he required, somewhere in the neighbourhood of London, a villa with three best bedrooms, a dining-room and drawing-room, and suitable for a small establishment. The agent "yes, Sir Johned," and "no, Sir Johned," and "you may depend upon my getting you the very thing you require, Sir Johned" him, until he felt inclined to knock him down upon the spot and run away. But when poor Sir John began to give very particular directions that all letters on the subject of this villa were to be sent to him at his club, and not to his house, the man's countenance spread into something as near a grin as a respectable tradesman could allow himself to indulge in. "You may trust to me, Sir John," he exclaimed. "I perfectly understand, Sir John. You may rest assured that your confidence shall be respected." And with this there came over the fellow's eyelid something approaching so near to a wink, that Sir John felt in a greater rage than ever, and walked off muttering anything but prayers, "for all the world as if he were a Hindian bashaw," as the house-agent expressed himself afterwards when speaking of the interview to a friend. At last—and with the utmost secrecy, as if he really was doing something which he ought not—he got a suitable house in the new part of Kensington, which he took at a rent of seventy-five pounds a year. Of course the agreement for the house had to be made out in his name, for he had not yet engaged the governess who was to rule over the establishment. Sir John had been a householder in London for four or five years, and his name was, of course, in the Blue Book, the Court Guide, and the Post-office Directory. A reference to any of these books showed that he lived in a house for which he must pay at least four hundred per annum rent. From what he told the house-agent, the house he hired was intended for another person or persons, and yet it was to be taken in his name. Moreover, he wore such a very decided air of being ashamed—or, more correctly speaking, perhaps, of being frightened—of what he was doing, that it was hardly to be wondered at if house-agents thought there was something out of the way—something that was anything but all right—in the transaction. One of these gentry, in fact, as good as told him as much. "You see, Sir John," he said, "I don't mind speaking out. The landlord of that house don't want, he don't, to let any promiscuous party like, 'ave 'is 'ouse. The neighbourhood is most 'spectable, and you see, Sir John, as how if he lets any party live in that house, which is a

lady without a husband like, why, you see, the valer like would go down, it would. Not but what *you* is most 'spectable, Sir John, and if you wished the 'ouse for Lady Milson it would be quite another affair. But the landlord, he don't like letting parties that has not got a name like, 'aving 'is 'ouse. You'll 'scuse me, Sir John, but if you took a look round St. John Wood's way, I think you would be more like to soot yourself." It is hardly necessary to say that Sir John did *not* "take a look St. John Wood's way," and that he did not trouble that house-agent any further.

But even with the house secured were his troubles ended? By no means. He asked his tailor—he was half afraid and half ashamed to ask any of his friends—where he could get a small house furnished throughout, and the snip smiled, and, in recommending him to an upholsterer, said, "I *quite* understand what you mean, Sir John." And when he went to see the upholsterer, the miscreant behaved in exactly the same way. "Quite so, Sir John. I see *exactly* what you wish, Sir John. A ten-roomed house, furnished neatly, and with every luxury. I did the same for Lord Epsom last week, Sir John. A matter, I should say, of four hundred pounds, or it may be a trifle more." And the fellow smiled a knowing smile, as much as to say, "I know all about it, but you are quite safe in *my* hands."

At last the house at Kensington was got and furnished, but as yet the governess had not been engaged; although, if all went well, the "old gunner's" daughters might be expected at Southampton in about six weeks. Not that there were no answers to the advertisement which heads this chapter. On the contrary, there were many; but the difficulty was how or where to see those ladies whose references and antecedents made them at all eligible for the situation. One lady, writing to "J. M., at the Oriental Club," said that she was forty-five years of age, that she was a Frenchwoman, had a good knowledge of English, was a Roman Catholic, and had been a governess for twelve years, during which time she had lived in three families, and that she could give references to her last situation, which was in Lord Eastcheap's family, she having only left his lordship's daughters when the last of them had gone out in the world. This was an opportunity which Sir John would at once have seized upon, but that the very excellence of the references debarred him from so doing. He knew Lord and Lady Eastcheap very well. He knew that their three daughters were exceedingly well-brought-up girls, and he was perfectly certain that any governess recommended by that family would be exactly the sort of person to whom, of all others, he would like to entrust his old friend's daughters. But he could not take any steps in the matter. He felt quite certain that if he wrote or spoke to either Lord or Lady Eastcheap on the subject, that either one or the other would speak to Lady Milson the first time they met, and ask whether Sir John's

friends had engaged the governess that had lived in their family. Thus, in the same way that his own respectability made it difficult for him to hire a house without others believing that he was doing those things which he ought not to have done, the good reference of this governess made it all the more difficult for him to engage her. Then, again, the advertisement which he had put in the Post not unnaturally attracted the attention of some of the old boys at the Oriental; and Clogson, formerly accountant-general in Orissa, offered the hall porter a sovereign to tell him who "J. M." was. That functionary, to his honour be it said, did not betray Sir John, and declared that he did not know anything about the letters. But Clogson was not to be put off. He watched day after day in the hall of the club, until he saw Sir John Milson take up the little packet of letters addressed in ladies' handwriting to "J. M.," and then he commenced a series of mild jokes about "sly dogs," of married men having their little weaknesses, and of "nice goings on which men's wives ought to be told of," until poor Sir John was driven half mad, and almost made a vow that he would go off to the Land's End, and leave the young ladies to shift for themselves when they arrived in England. At last he succeeded in hearing of a lady whom he thought would suit, and whose reference was to a lady in the north of England, of whom neither he nor his wife knew anything. Moreover, the reference proved most satisfactory; and so, after dodging about for some days—giving the governess appointments in confectioners' shops, in railway waiting-rooms, and in all sorts of odd out-of-the-way places—he engaged her, and duly installed her in the small house at Kensington, there to await the arrival of her future pupils.

But before the advent of those young ladies, poor Sir John got into trouble, for the first time in his married life, with his wife. Lady Milson had a sort of unattached female aide-de-camp, who came and went to and from the house like a tame dog. This was a lady somewhat advanced in years, whose husband had once been "a highly respectable merchant in the City," but who was now bankrupt in business, insolvent in purse, and broken down in spirit. Mrs. Morris had become acquainted with Annie at some "Ladies' - Poor - District - Visiting - Aid Society's" meeting, and had impressed the rich Anglo-Indian's wife with a feeling of compassion for Mr. Morris's poverty. Owing to Lady Milson's representations, Sir John had used his interest to obtain appointments in the Indian public works and telegraph departments for Mr. Morris's two sons, and in return for his kindness Mrs. Morris had by degrees worked herself into being a sort of private secretary, and public toady of Annie. Like all ladies who have lived much in India, the latter was terribly wanting in energy, and was only too glad to be saved trouble by an unpaid lady "help," who took messages to her dressmaker, found out where the best and cheapest tea was

to be had, checked her tradesmen's books, and wrote her cards of invitation, all for the sake of an occasional lift in her ladyship's carriage, and the pleasure of talking to her friends in Holloway about her "dear friend Lady Milson." Sir John hated Mrs. Morris. She was always in his way. If he wanted to have a quiet evening at home, he was sure to find, on coming back from the club at seven o'clock, that Mrs. Morris had invited herself—or had remained so late that Lady Milson could not help asking her—to remain to dinner, when her thin sour face and her fawning manner to his wife made his wine taste hot, and his soup feel cold. Mrs. Morris had quite wit enough to see that, although Annie liked her for petty services rendered, Sir John hated her, and that were it not for this she would have been asked much oftener to the house—that is, asked in a more gratifying and substantial manner; for, as it was, she went there often enough, but in a back-stairs sort of way. Knowing as she did that Sir John disliked her, she determined, if ever opportunity offered, to create a misunderstanding between him and his wife. The occasion came sooner than she had dared to hope for. Going one morning to an Oxford-street shop to match some silk for Lady Milson, Mrs. Morris thought fit at luncheon-time to turn into that well-known place of refreshment for ladies a few doors on the Pantheon side of the Circus. When she entered, there were, as usual, several persons busy with the business of luncheon, and amongst them, seated at one of the small tables, was Sir John, in earnest conversation with a lady. The gentleman did not see his wife's toady, and the latter took a seat behind him, where she could hear all that was passing, without herself being seen. To her intense disgust, she found that Sir John and the lady were talking in French, of which language she did not understand a single word, and, therefore, all her manoeuvres to find out what they were speaking about were in vain. She was not, however, to be put off aiming the blow she intended at Sir John, and that very evening told Lady Milson that she had seen her husband in close confab with a young and very good-looking lady who spoke in French. The governess was fifty if she was a day, and "plain at that," as an American backwoodsman would say. Annie had never in her life felt what it was to be jealous, for Sir John had never given her the slightest occasion for being so. At first she would not believe a word of what Mrs. Morris told her. Her husband was fifty-six years of age; they had been married more than a quarter of a century; was it likely that at his age he would make appointments to meet ladies at confectioners' shops? She told her toady that there must be some mistake, and that it was impossible that the gentleman she saw could have been Sir John. But Mrs. Morris insisted upon her story being true, and so at last Annie half believed her. That evening Sir John happened to be dining with some old Indian

brother-officers at the club, and did not come home until Mrs. Morris had left his house. When he returned, his wife told him what she had heard, but in a sort of half-joking way, as if she did not quite believe it, which she did not. Sir John was too old a soldier to fly when he knew the enemy was behind him, so he put a bold face on the affair, and declared that it was quite true. An elderly lady, he said, had spoken to him in Oxford-street, and asked him in French how she could find her way back to Islington, from whence she had come. She did not speak a word of English, and so he had taken her into the confectioner's, ordered her some refreshment, procured her a cab, and then sent her on her way rejoicing. The next time he saw his enemy, he asked her why she had not come forward and spoken to him in the luncheon-room, and Mrs. Morris saw that for this time at any rate she was checkmated.

But Sir John's troubles, or rather his fear of troubles and scandal, did not end here. Before long it became perfectly known in the neighbourhood of the house he had taken who it was that had rented the place, and, accordingly, prospectuses and cards from cheap furniture shops, from wine-merchants, coal-merchants, grocers, butchers, bakers, livery-stable keepers, and every sort and condition of tradesman, came pouring in upon him. Some of these were sent to his club, others to his house, and Annie wondered not a little why shop-keepers in South Kensington should all of a sudden want to supply goods to a house in Tyburnia, or why those persons should imagine that she was going to change her tradesmen. How often Sir John anathematised the absurd whim of his friend, who had enjoined him that no one, not even Annie, should be told the secret of the two girls coming home! All day and every day he was in fever—not that Lady Milson should discover all about the girls, for nothing would have pleased him better if she could have done so without his having in any way helped her to the knowledge, but lest some letter, some gossiping newsmonger, or some mischief-making busy-body should induce his wife to believe that he was carrying on some intimacy which he did not wish her to know of.

At last, the usual telegram appeared in the papers, announcing that the Calcutta mails had arrived at Alexandria, and that they might be expected at Marseilles upon such a date, and at Southampton so many days afterwards. Ten days later and the news was flashed by the wires from Gibraltar that the P. and O. Company's steamer, the Ripon, had put in there, had coaled, and passed on towards Southampton. The next day—he trumped up some fable by which Annie was induced to believe he had run over to Paris to meet an old friend—Sir John found himself engaging a sitting-room and three bedrooms at the hotel at Southampton, for himself and his two expected charges. The steamer was true to its time, as the boats of the P. and O. Company almost invariably are, and

on going on board Sir John very soon discovered the two Miss Fabers, both glad enough to exchange the confinement of the vessel for the liberty of shore. The following day they were fairly installed in their house at Kensington, and Sir John congratulated himself on the idea that his troubles were at an end, whereas they had really hardly begun.

The governess to whose care Sir John had entrusted the two girls had never kept house for herself, and was in perpetual difficulties of some sort or other. Had Milson been able to tell his wife all about them, she would no doubt have gone to see them and set matters to rights very quickly. But the imperative wishes of his old friend Labor made this impossible, and so Sir John—always in a flurry lest he should be found out doing what he could give no explanation about—went on bungling and trying to mend matters, and only making them worse than before. One day he would receive a note from the lady, telling him that the cistern of their house would not work, and would he be good enough to send to the landlord about it. Another time it was the servants who would not obey her, and who would not do the work of the house; or else some tradesman had charged her fifty per cent too much, and was most insolent when she remonstrated with him.

For some time poor Sir John was kept perpetually upon the trot between Tyburnia and Kensington, but at last he secured the services of an experienced housekeeper, and put her in charge of the establishment, leaving the governess free to direct the studies of the young ladies. He was then not obliged to go so often to see his charges; but before he had got this settled his wife's suspicions were fairly aroused that there was something worrying him, and she felt quite certain that he had some secret annoyance of which he had not told her.

Up to this time there perhaps never was a couple that had fewer secrets between them than Sir John and Lady Milson. Even in money matters the former not only told his wife whatever and all that she asked him about, but made a point of frequently explaining to her the various items in his banker's book, and showing her how the money had been invested in this or that security, how the interest was paid, and all about it. In India—at least until Sir John was free of debt—it had been Annie who had kept the accounts; but since their return to England Sir John had to transact his own business, but had always shown his wife how matters stood. One day, wanting to see on what date she had paid a certain account, she went to his desk, and taking out his cheque-book began to turn over the counterfoils in order to find what she wanted. As she did so, the name of "Miss F." struck her eye two or three times, as having either received money from, or had money paid for her by, Sir John Milson. The name was repeated so often on the different counterfoils, that Lady Milson began to wonder who this lady could possibly be. Judging from the cheque-book, her husband must have been pay-

ing for everything this personage had in the world. Thus: "24th June, Miss F., millinery bill, fifty-nine pounds ten shillings and fourpence;" "28th June, Miss F., house-money, twenty-five pounds;" "1st July, Miss F., furniture, one hundred and forty pounds;" "2nd July, Miss F., pocket-money, twenty pounds;" "5th July, Miss F., bookseller's bill, thirteen pounds four shillings and fourpence;" "10th July, Miss F., furniture bill, one hundred pounds;" and so on, to the tune of five hundred and fifty or six hundred pounds, and all this within six weeks or two months. Now there are few wives who would not, under similar circumstances, have behaved much more foolishly than Annie did. She simply resolved, on the first possible occasion, to ask Sir John who this Miss F. was, and how it came to pass that he spent so much money upon her. Of course she had no idea that the cheques drawn by Sir John were not against his own income, and were paid from the money remitted by his old friend for the use of his children.

At dinner that evening Sir John had evidently something on his mind which worried him. The fact was, that he had the day before received at his club a very gushing note from his elder ward, thanking him for having forwarded to her a letter from her father. The note meant nothing: it was merely written by a girl of nineteen who was grateful to a man whom she looked upon as old enough to be her father. But in the hands of a person ignorant of the relation in which the writer stood to Sir John, or if read by one who thought he saw evil in every sentence he could not explain, Miss Faber's letter might be made to mean anything. Sir John, although a very orderly man in most things, was—like most people who have lived long in a country where their servants cannot understand their language—very careless about his letters, and seldom a week passed without his butler—who also valeted him—bringing him papers of some sort which he had left in his frock-coat when he dressed for dinner. This had been the fate of Miss Faber's letter. The butler had found it in the breast-pocket of his master's coat, and had no doubt made himself thoroughly acquainted with the contents before returning it. Sir John felt certain that the poor girl's letter had been the talk of the servants' room, and that, as his wife's maid was known to be "keeping company" with the butler, the chances were that some report—greatly exaggerated, as a matter of course—about this letter would reach his wife's ears. When they sat down to table, Lady Milson was wondering to herself who "Miss F.," who spent so much of her husband's money, could be; and Sir John was speculating whether or not she had heard anything about the letter which had been found in his coat-pocket. The dinner passed over silently and stiffly enough, and when it came to an end, and the servants had left the room, Lady Milson at once took up her parable and put the question to her husband.

"John, dear, I went to look over your cheque-

book to-day, for I wanted to find out when I paid Gurk's last bill. I found here and there notes made of large sums of money you had paid a Miss F. *Who is Miss F.?*"

"It has come at last," said Sir John to himself. "How the mischief I am to get out of the mess now is more than I can see at present. What did you say, Annie?" he asked, in a louder voice, and to gain time.

"I asked," said Lady Milson, "who Miss F. is, for you seem, by your cheque-book, to have paid large sums lately either to her, or on her behalf?"

"Miss F., Miss F.," Sir John kept repeating, as if he could hardly understand the question. "I don't know any such person. I gave you a cheque for Miss Lamb, your dressmaker, some time ago; have you mistaken L. for F., Annie?"

"No, John, I made no mistake. There are at least seven or eight amounts noted on your cheque-book as paid to Miss F., and I wanted to know who that person is."

"Oh," said Sir John, a bright idea seizing him, "I see *now* what you mean, Annie. I remember all about it. You know Franks, the old Bombay colonel, who is always at the club?" (Sir John knew very well that Annie had never heard of the man before in her life, but he went on boldly.) "We always call Franks 'Miss,' because he is so smooth-faced, and talks so very like an old maid. Well, I have had some money sent me on his account from India, a kind of joint speculation in which he and Watson had shares, and I was to receive the dividends and pay each his quota. Watson took all his portion in a lump; but Franks asked me to invest his for him, and pay him the principal as he wanted it. I did so, and marked down each payment I made as for Miss F.—Miss Franks."

"That is it, is it?" said Lady Milson. "Do you know, I really began to think all kinds of strange things, John, when I saw those entries in your cheque-book;" and up-stairs went Lady Milson to the drawing-room, whilst Sir John retired to his study to smoke his after-dinner cheroot, and wonder whether he would have earned his bread if he had followed the calling of an improvisatore. Inquiry was stopped for the present, but it was only for a time. A few days later came the long impending explosion.

Sir John's wards had several times asked him to take them out a little in London, and to let them see something of the metropolis. Amongst other places they were very eager to visit was the Crystal Palace. They were so very new to London that they could not possibly go there alone, and their governess, who had lived nearly all the time of her sojourn in England with a noble family that resided in the country, confessed that she would be of little or no use in going with her pupils into public places. Sir John at last consented to take them to Sydenham. The day was fixed, and Milson proceeded to the house at Kensington where his wards resided. He found one of them suffering from a bad headache, but very urgent that her sister should not have to remain

at home because she was too unwell to go out. Milson was by no means an ill-natured man. He would have been only too glad to take the daughters of his old friend out all day, and every day, had their existence, and who they were, been known to his friends, and particularly to his wife. But he dreaded being seen abroad with young ladies whose companionship might be construed into something which, although far from the truth, was a perfectly natural surmise. However, on this occasion he thought, for once, that he might lay aside his caution. His wife, he knew, had gone to lunch with Lady Fantzle, the wife of an old Indian friend, and in the afternoon the whole party were to proceed to see the pictures at the Royal Academy, which was just opened for the season. When Sir John left home, he told his wife that he was going into the City on business, that afterwards he had to see an official at the India House in Victoria-street, and that if he could get away in time he would join Lady Fantzle's party in Trafalgar-square. However, man proposes, but the gods dispose of events in this world.

FLIES.

"NONSENSE!" said my tenderest friend and life-companion, when I told her, as I always do, what I was going to write about. "You cannot possibly find anything to say about flies." This was my wife's first impression of the matter. "I should think," I replied, "that a good deal might be said about flies, and their uses in the economy of creation." "No doubt," said she; "but flies are a nuisance, especially those horrible mosquitoes, from which we suffered so much in America. Indeed, now I come to consider it, I think you might write something readable about those dreadful pests. I think the plague of flies, that afflicted Egypt when Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go free, must have been a plague of mosquitoes." "Very likely," said I; "and then you know that one of the names given to the devil is Beelzebub, or the Lord of the Flies." "I wish he had them all in his own dominions, then," rejoined my wife. "What all the flies?" I inquired. "Would you banish the bees and the butterflies in all their innumerable varieties of beauty, and the flying beetles, and the fire-flies that make night brilliant in warm latitudes?" "No," she replied. "I was wrong. I would only banish the common flies and the mosquitoes." "Then I will write about common flies and mosquitoes, and leave the bees and the butterflies alone."

The busy, impertinent, buzzing little creature known in most parts of the world as *The Fly*, is chiefly remarkable for its incessant cheerful activity, and for its constant thirstiness. It seems to have a love for everything that is succulent and sweet. In this respect, it is honourably distinguished from the culex, or gnat family, of which there are no less than thirty varieties in the British Isles, none of which have any taste

for sweets, nor any relish for anything except the blood which they suck from the pores of animals. The house-fly is a veritable dipsomaniac:

Busy, thirsty, curious fly,
Thou shalt drink as well as I,

says the old convivial chant; and, in this predilection for drink, the fly very much resembles the toper who apostrophises him. Nothing potable comes amiss to him—from wine to brandy, from milk to water. Like man in search of his gratification, little musca continually comes to grief. At the breakfast-table he dips into the tea or coffee cup, if he have a chance, and is often scalded to death for his temerity. He darts from the sugar-basin to the cream-jug, and not unfrequently falls into the clammy liquor and is drowned for his greediness. Sitting alone at breakfast, one morning, at a country inn, with nothing particular to do, and with no newspaper or book to read, I amused myself by extricating an unfortunate fly from the cream into which it had fallen, and placed it upon the tablecloth to live or die, as fate, not I, might determine. It was not in my power to do anything more for my small fellow-creature. Its wings were clogged, for the cream was not London cream. It had not lain in this unhappy condition above a minute, when another fly was tempted to take a look. Whether the new comer understood the real state of the case, or whether it was too fond of cream to refuse to taste it, even when clotted over the body of a moribund brother, is not easy to decide; but putting out its little proboscis, it began to suck vigorously at the cream. Nor was it left alone to its enjoyment, or to its work of mercy, whichever it may have been, for it was speedily joined by five or six other flies, who all sucked away so busily at the cream on the legs, wings, and body of my little friend, that it soon began to turn and flutter. Ultimately it rose on its feet, rubbed its two fore-legs together, as a happy man rubs his hands, and finally flew away as briskly as if nothing had happened. Peter Pindar's toper would have replaced the fly in its wet grave, as he did, to the disgust of the company, the swarm of flies that darkened their bowl of punch:

Up jumped the bacchanalian crew on this,
Taking it very much amiss,
Swearing, and in an attitude to smite:
"Lord," cried the man, with gravely lifted eyes,
"Though I don't like to swallow flies,
"I did not know but *others might*."

It is the constant thirst which besets the fly that not only leads it into danger, but which principally renders it so troublesome in summer, whether to man or other animals. The fly settles upon your hand or face, not to suck your blood for a drink, like the mosquito, the gnat, or the midge, and, worst of all, the gallinipper, but simply that it may slake its thirst at the pearly drops upon your skin—visible and tempting to the fly, though invisible to yourself. When bent on an object of this kind, the perseverance of the fly is wonderful. No-

thing but death will keep it away from you. Driven off for a moment, it returns to the charge, brave in its ignorance. Who has often succeeded in chasing a bluebottle into the four corners of a pane of glass, and so catching him? The only recorded instance of success is that of the irascible Anglo-Indian who, in his despair, seized a poker for the task. "I smashed the window," he exclaimed triumphantly, "but never mind—I killed the fly."

Naturalists tell us that the fly is stone-deaf—in this respect unlike the bee, which swarms to the noises made upon warming-pans or other metallic implements. But nature is always kind. The blind man receives compensation in the increased power of his other senses, especially that of touch; and in like manner our deaf little friend, the fly, can see both behind and before, and cannot be taken wholly un-awares. The inconvenience suffered in our dwellings from the common house-fly is not great in the latitude of England, unless to grocers, butchers, and fishmongers; but in the middle and southern states of North America they are often as great a plague as mosquitoes. They tumble into your tea, your soup, your lager-beer, your wine, your gravy; they fasten upon every damp spot on the tablecloth in scores and hundreds; they cover every article of food, and defile your windows, your mirrors, your picture-frames—everything that is bright and shiny—and are the despair of the good housewife. You may catch them with fly-papers, and attract them with a light by a very ingenious "Yankee notion," and so kill them by countless thousands; but their numbers never seem to diminish. Nothing but the cold weather has any effect in staying the plague. The weakest are killed off by myriads when the frost comes, and the strongest betake themselves out of sight into little holes and corners of the walls, outside and in, or in the bark of trees, and compose themselves to sleep until the summer comes again. The fly, like the dormouse, the bear, and many other living creatures, hibernates. "Sleep," which Sancho Panza says "covers a man all over, thoughts and all, like a cloak," performs the same kindly office even for small unconsidered pests. Sometimes a gleam of sunshine in November or December wakes up a fly from his nap. The rash insect thinks that summer has come again, crawls out, shakes itself, and makes a melancholy attempt to be lively and happy. The adventurer generally pays with its life the penalty of its ignorance, and never sees summer nor lumps of sugar more.

Field-flies are not very troublesome in England, except to horses and cattle. They are mostly of a larger species than the domestic fly, and are considerably more ferocious and pertinacious. I was once coming down from the top of Goatfell, in the Island of Arran, one of the loveliest of the Western Isles, possessing one of the sublimest of Scotch mountains, when I was suddenly attacked by a cloud of flies a little larger than the domestic fly. The cloud was cer-

tainly a cube of fifteen or twenty feet, and must have contained millions of flies. They followed me for miles in my progress down the mountain towards the little hostelry of Brodick, and fastened upon every exposed part of face and neck, to drink in the moisture that hard exercise had brought out over all the surface of my body. I unloosed my plaid from my shoulders to swing it around me like a flail to scare away the invaders. In vain! In vain! One down, a thousand came on! I clapped my hands together in the midst of the cloud, and slew my hundreds at every coming together of my palms. It was of no use. You can't frighten a fly, you can only kill him. On they came—on, for ever on, like the rushing of Niagara! At last I struck into a belt of plantation, thickly wooded with fir and larch, where my tormentors seemed to lose their way; for in five minutes I was disembarassed of them, much to my satisfaction. Since that time I have learned to sympathise with horses in vehicles pursued by flies for miles, in defiance of the whip of the driver; and to admire the friendly arrangement of two horses in a field. "Stand with your haunches towards my head," says Dobbin to Bobbin, "and brush away the flies from my ears with your beautiful long tail, and I will do the same good turn for you." "Agreed," says Bobbin to Dobbin; and so they stand for hours under the shadow of trees in the sultry summer heats, mutually helpful, and doubtless quite aware of the convenience as well as fairness of the bargain.

The first great use of all flies in the economy of nature seems to be to act the part of scavengers, and consume the decaying animal matters, or excretions, that are not good above ground—though they would be excellent under ground, if it were worth any one's while to put them there. The next is, that they shall supply food for birds and fishes. What is the use of the ephemera? They are born, grow old, and die in one day; they seem to do nothing in their short lifetime but dance in the sunshine, as if there were not a particle of sorrow in their little world—a large world enough for them.

A singular circumstance has lately been reported by scientific men on the subject of the domestic fly of Europe and America. Everybody knows that the civilised man is, and always has been, more than a match for the savage; and that before the continually encroaching steps of the Anglo-Saxon and other European races—but more especially the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian—the aborigines of the American continent, of the Cape of Good Hope, of Australia, and New Zealand, have been gradually disappearing. If two races refuse to amalgamate, the weaker goes to the wall. Civilisation is too much for them, and they retire from its presence only to linger a little while in the land of their fathers, conscious of their inferiority, and driven to the grave at last. That this should happen in the case of men is not very surprising, but that it

should happen in the case of house-flies, is not a little remarkable. Dr. Haast, a Fellow of the Linnean Society, writes to Dr. J. D. Hooker, from New Zealand, that not only does the European drive away the Maori or aboriginal inhabitant, but that the European house-fly drives away the New Zealand fly. Of two evils, New Zealand colonists prefer the lesser, and as the spread of the European insect goes on slowly, they are actually importing house-flies in boxes and bottles to their new inland stations. Is it that all living things that are much in the society of, or in immediate contiguity to man in a high state of civilisation, have their faculties sharpened by the association—sharpened, as it were, by danger, and the necessity of protecting themselves against such formidable foes. Is it that similar animals and insects in wild countries, where men are few, are not so highly educated by adverse circumstances, not so acute, clever, and wary; and that when superiors of their own race are brought into contact with them, the weaker flies before the stronger, as we see it among men?

Enough for the present on the subject of the fly. To please my wife, I turn to the mosquito, a creature which has not yet made its appearance in the British Isles (it is to be hoped it never will), but which has several near relations amongst us in the culex family, of which the gnat and the midge are the best known members. Mosquito is a Spanish word signifying a little fly. Though it be little, it makes up for deficiency of size by abundance of venom. Some of the fairest portions of the globe are rendered all but uninhabitable by these "pesky" insects. The mosquito, and his big brother the gallinipper, which is said to be able to sting into your leg through the leather of your jack-boot, though they do not altogether banish mankind from the warmer countries of the temperate zone, render those regions particularly uncomfortable in the summer days, and, above all, in the summer nights, when they not only "murder sleep," but in the woods have sometimes been known to murder sleepers.

Let me ask the reader to accompany me, in spirit, to a little cottage which I once occupied in Staten Island, near New York—one of the most compact and beautiful spots that the sun shines upon—and hear what is to be said about "skeeters," as many Americans call the mosquito for shortness. The cottage is a "frame" or wooden one, substantially built for winter as well as for summer habitation, and with a broad verandah in the front and on the eastern side, on which some English people—myself and wife among the number—and some Americans are seated in the cool of the evening. Before the verandah extends a flower-garden, beautifully laid out, and a reach of ground sloping for about a mile towards the Atlantic. Behind it are three acres of forest land; two of which are almost in the condition of the aboriginal wilderness, and contain some stately fir-trees, under the shadow of which the Red Indians may have erected their wigwams, smoked the calumet of peace, or dug

up the war-hatchet for bloody fight. The other acre is laid out in a series of kitchen-gardens, which yield a bountiful crop of most of the vegetables known in Europe, and of several others which the English climate is not sunny enough to produce in the same excellence and profusion. Among others, the oyster-plant, the egg-plant, the tomato, and the ochra; the latter famous as the main ingredient of a delicious soup called "gumbo." The verandah—the pleasantest part of the house, and which in these American cottages and villas is the favourite resort of the family in the sultry afternoons of summer—is overgrown with roses and creeping vines of almost every variety, among which the bigonia, or trumpet-vine, is conspicuous for its beautiful red flowers.

As we are new to the country, this being our first summer in these sunny latitudes, we notice many things that escape the attention of the natives, as we sit in the verandah, look towards the ocean, and survey the scene around us. Most lovely is the clear blue sky, without a speck of cloud to relieve the monotony of the deep cerulean. The mercury in the thermometer stands at ninety-six degrees in the shade, and were it not for the whiff of the pleasant wind that creeps over the waters of the Atlantic, laden with freshness, the heat would be oppressive. As it is, the ice-pitcher is a valued friend, and the fan an inseparable companion, not only for the sake of the coolness which its motion imparts, but for its utility in driving away mosquitoes. Were it not for these intolerable plagues, the climate would be greatly preferable to that of England; but mosquitoes are a daily and a nightly misery. "There is a soul of goodness in things evil," I said to a neighbour, an American lady of English parentage who had come to our verandah; "and the all-wise Creator has made nothing in vain. Yet with the fullest faith in this doctrine, I could never find out of what use the mosquito was, or what were its purposes in the great scheme of the world." "Perhaps, not," replied the fair one; "but may not that be your own fault, Mr. Philosopher? In the first place, mosquitoes breed in the marshes. May they not warn us of the necessity of draining the marshes, and carrying off the stagnant waters, so as to increase the arable surface of the land? In the second place, mosquitoes, in countries where there are no marshes, breed in the running streams; the larvæ of the mosquitoes are the favourite food of young trout. And if you are fond of trout, why should the trout not have his dinner of mosquito larvæ, to be fatted for your enjoyment? In the third place, the sting of the mosquito inoculates, as I have heard say, against the attacks of fevers that are prevalent in all marshy and undrained countries; and surely a mosquito-bite is better than a fever, Mr. Philosopher?" It is always in vain to argue with a lady, so I said no more, inwardly content that so much could be urged in behalf even of the pestilential little creature, which was in those days a veritable thorn in the flesh of me and mine.

The mosquito has the treacherous habit of flying low. If you sit in your drawing-room (parlour it is always called in the United States) in your slippers, or in your library or study, if you are fortunate enough to possess one, in your dressing-gown and slippers, you will not be aware, if you are a new comer in the land, what brings the blains and swellings upon your instep, and all the portion of the leg and foot of which the stocking is the only defence. The cause is the mosquito. He flies near the carpet, sees with microscopic eye through the interstices of the woollen fabric, inserts his tube of suction into the flesh, and draws out as much blood as he needs for his thirst. If it ended there, no great harm would be done; but after he has drunken at your expense, he drops a little venom into the pore which he has opened; and the result is irritation, which you are prompted to relieve by counter-irritation, and constantly increasing inflammation of the envenomed part. The best alleviator is spirits of hartshorn—a phial of which most people who know the bane and antidote take care to have in readiness both at bed and board. As for me, I was compelled to relinquish the wearing of slippers, and retain my boots to the last moment before going to bed; not exonerated even then from the mosquitoes, which maliciously fastened upon the space—if I sat cross-legged—between the top of the boot and the trousers, and sucked and poisoned at their will. Ladies, less protected, suffer more than men in this respect. It is not to be understood that the mosquitoes confine themselves to the floor. They fly in every stratum from floor to roof; and bite whenever they get a chance. At night, sleep would be liable to painful disturbances, were it not for the mosquito-nets, which envelop the beds of all prudent sleepers. Even then, the difficulty is to prevent a mosquito or two from getting under the net while the bed is being made. If one enters, there might as well be a hundred. The evil is done; and if the intruder be not expelled, sleep is impossible. He peals a triumphal horn in your ear as he settles upon your forehead; and you might almost as successfully attempt to catch a flash of lightning in your hand, as to try to catch a mosquito.

The only way to be freed of this persecution is to hunt them by daylight. They generally settle upon the walls and ceiling, where a sharp and experienced eye can readily detect them. The most approved and successful mode of dealing with them is to get a common hair broom, and tie over the hair a wet cloth or towel, and dab the implement suddenly against the mosquito. This kills him, and does not alarm his fellows. With a little patience, keeping the doors and windows closed meanwhile, that none of the same tribe may enter, a careful servant or housewife can effectually clear a bedroom in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, and render sleep possible. In the Southern States the mosquito is developed in the swamps into the gallinipper—a great torment to the human race, but a greater

torment to the brute creation. Sometimes a horse or ox, engaged in agricultural work in the fields, is clad in trousers—two pairs, of course—to guard its legs from this maddening scourge—the driver himself being tolerably well protected if he have a pipe in his mouth; for both mosquito and gallinipper detest the fumes of tobacco, and keep at a respectable distance from an earnest smoker. Pioneers in the wilderness, land-surveyors, geologists, naturalists, and others, who have to explore new regions, become so accustomed and hardened to the mosquitoes and gallinippers as to think little of them; but it is the pipe or the cigar by day, and the camp-fire by night, which keeps them at a distance; or no amount of familiarity with the nuisance would ever reconcile anybody to its infliction. But Europe and America, though subject to pests like these, are comparatively happy. The grievance, if great, is to be borne; and a gallinipper, atrocious as he is, is an angel of grace and mercy compared with a fly called the *seroot*, which, Sir Samuel White Baker tells us, infests Abyssinia. "The animals," he says, "are almost worried to death by the countless flies, especially by that species that drives the camels from the country. This peculiar fly is about the size of a wasp, with an orange-coloured body, with black and white rings; the proboscis is terrific; it is double, and appears to be disproportioned, being two-thirds the length of the entire insect. When this fly attacks an animal or man, it pierces the skin instantaneously, like the prick of a red-hot needle driven deep into the flesh, at the same time the insect exerts every muscle of its body by buzzing with its wings as it buries the instrument to its greatest depth. The blood starts from the wound immediately, and continues to flow for a considerable time; this is an attraction to other flies in great numbers, many of which lay their eggs upon the wound."

Better to endure the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of. Better English flies and gnats, better American mosquitoes and gallinippers, than such a flying fiend as the Abyssinian *seroot*.

THE DEAR GIRL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BELLA DONNA," "NEVER FORGOTTEN," &c.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE LITTLE DINNER.

IN the interval, Vivian and Lucy wandered about, on this joyful day of the fair, inexpressibly happy. At "six sharp" they were at the café, where a neat little table for four had been laid, and the best dinner of the place ordered. Other tables near them were filled with guests. It was a busy time.

They waited a long time, and soon guessed, what was the truth, that the fitful Dacres had forgotten the whole, and had "picked up" some yet more pleasant friends, with whom he had gone off to dine at a far better establishment.

"I am not sorry," said Vivian. "We have waited long enough; and, had I been consulted, I should not have had that officer—at least, with you."

"He was charming," said Lucy, slyly. She was in great spirits. "And so gallant! And I am so sorry he is not here."

"Why should we not have our little dinner?" said Vivian. "No one knows us here."

"Oh, I should so like it!" said Lucy, clasping her hands. "As for the gossips, I can despise them. It is enough for them to say it, and I will go against them. Besides," she added, gravely, "if poor Harco came back and found us gone away—"

"Yes," said Vivian; "let us have our little dinner, and let me enjoy life while I may."

Women at other tables noticed the pair with interest. They called him "*beau garçon*." It was in the garden of the café, which was surrounded with arbours and little tables set out, and lamps already twinkling among the trees. Music, although of an indifferent sort, was playing in the centre. By-and-by there was to be a dance. Soldiers of the infantry of the line, hands deep in pockets, were lounging about, waiting for that blissful amusement. One had already planned how he would humbly, and with all politeness, secure the hand of the charming "mees" who was sitting in the arbour.

"Oh, this *is* happiness!" said Lucy, in delight. "What a charming day to think of!"

"And something for me, too, when I—But I will have no foreboding. I will never be gloomy; and whatever you do with me, or however you treat me, you shall see no change on my face, no wild eyes nor wicked glances."

Lucy laughed. "I know why you say that, and who you are thinking of. It is a little absurd, and people think it strange. Poor Mr. West! and yet I so pity him."

"Pity him!" said Vivian, warmly. "I am afraid there is a morbid vindictiveness under all that. It is speaking too gently of him. As for me, he glares at me, as I pass him, in a way that would be alarming, if it were not comical. Poor soul! Yet I dare say he was preyed upon by this delusion of being injured, until it has taken hold of him. Sometimes he seems to be a little unsettled in his mind."

"That occurred to me, too," said Lucy, gravely, and with much concern. "And yet he is so changed. He was once—and not long ago—oh! so noble, so kind, so chivalrous! I would have done anything for him, and liked him so much; but even then he was odd," added Lucy doubtfully. "Curious—for papa wished me to promise to marry him, and he wished it; and I had come that very day from Miss Pringle's, and had never seen any one," went on Lucy, apologetically. "But he took such a curious turn, and wouldn't hear of it. He said I must wait for years, perhaps, and must learn to like him, so that, unless I felt I could do so after a long, long time, it must not be thought of. He forced this on me, and made it a bargain."

"An odd being, indeed," said Vivian, smiling.

"Then he comes back," went on Lucy, "and he finds that I have done what he wished; and of a sudden all his liking, and good sense, and his wish for *my interest*, change into a sort of fury. I have an instinct that at this moment he hates me, and would kill me, if he could."

"You may despise him, dearest Lucy. He shall do you no harm, not even by so much as a look, while I am with you. But we may be charitable, and believe that this is some morbid brooding. That strange sister of his, too!"

"Yes, yes," said Lucy, eagerly. "I am sure that is it, and that he is good; but that he is a little unsettled in mind. Poor, poor Mr. West, if it should be that!"

"And do you know," said the colonel, "I begin to think your father was right in thinking he saw his face to-day. It is just like what a man in that state of mind would do—follow and spy on us."

"Papa!" said Lucy, starting. "What can have become of him? He should have come back by this time; and we are to get back? It is so late."

"He is here, don't be afraid," said Vivian, rising. "He has got with some of these good fellows, and thought we would be rather dull company for him. I am sure he is in the café, or close by here, at the Silver Horn opposite. Shall I run and ask?"

"Do, do," said Lucy, hurriedly, getting her "things," "and find him."

He was not likely to do that, for Papa Harco was at this moment delightfully engaged at a capital café about a mile off, with two French gentlemen and an English friend, enjoying themselves. A comic French gentleman had given them "The Drum-Major's Song," with a drum-accompaniment on the table, that made all the glasses fly into the air; and Mr. Daeres's turn having now come, he was warbling, with infinite pathos and expression,

"Earth ne'er saw so fair a cree-ature!

Sweet Maria of the vale.

She, my love, all heart and nature——"

Vivian had been gone about a moment, when a stout gentleman came up, bowing and simpering to Lucy, whom she recognised as the ancient French "colonel in retreat." She received him with her natural air of welcome, for she knew now her father was at hand. "Where is he?" she said; "where did you leave him? We wish to go home."

"Go home, my dear mees," said the colonel, sitting down beside her on the outside, and thus cutting off her exit, "what folly! Just as I come up to lay myself at your feet. Nay, you must not turn away those liquid swimming eyes from one who would be proud to be your adorer." From the colonel's own eyes, much more entitled to be described as "swimming" than Lucy's, it was plain that he had recently been enjoying the pleasures of the table. Much alarmed, she moved away, and

tried to rise and escape from him. The half-pay colonel followed her. "Ah, pretty little colombe, what are you afraid of? Of me, your adorer? Come, don't be unkind, lovely mees."

"Sir," said Lucy, in great agitation, but not at all losing her presence of mind, "you must go away; and you must let me pass, or, sir, I shall call some one."

"What, to Jules or Charles, who know me as well as my own mother? Nonsense; sit down, and don't be foolish. There is no use. Your friend won't return. I sent him a long way to look for that good child, your papa."

"Oh, what shall I do?" cried Lucy, in terror at this sense of desertion and helplessness.

"You will stay with me, my loveliest, and we will be happy. Your lover is gone; why shall not I do in his room? Come, sit down, charming mees." Seizing her wrist, he gently drew her down into the seat beside him.

Lucy was paralysed with terror. Another girl would have screamed, but she would not for the world have a crowd and confusion. All she could find strength to do was to say in English, "Is there no one here to help me?"

Almost as she spoke she saw a familiar face gazing at her with sad, solemn, and sorrowful eyes fixed upon her. That grave figure was standing before them both, but without speaking or moving.

The colonel looked at him a moment, then said sharply, "Well, monsieur, have you finished? Have you taken your notes for our portraits?"

West did not answer him, but said in English to her, "This is quite charming! Is this your last and newest friend?"

Lucy was so astounded at this turn, that she forgot her situation and its terrors. Her lips curled, and with scorn she replied, "Is this your way of befriending a girl? Is this your noble revenge?"

His eyes flashed. "Pray what can you expect from one *who is unsettled in his mind*? How can he behave rationally? I heard that speech." Then he turned to the colonel. "Sir, you have made a mistake. This young lady is not alone here, and I must ask you to retire. I will look to her and take her to her friends."

The colonel twirled his moustache savagely. "Come, that is very excellent! Do you know, sir, *you* seem to be the intruder here. I can see by mees's looks that you are not over-welcome. She wants none of your lectures and warnings."

"You see," said West, still to her, "you see to what you have exposed yourself."

"Come! Do you hear me?" said the colonel, standing up and speaking furiously. "Do you want a soufflet to make you move?"

This ugly word roused West. "I am not going to make a brawl before this young lady, and have gendarmes called in. There is another way of doing this."

"Ah," screamed Lucy, in delight, "there he is! Oh, you have come back, dear Vivian! *You* will protect me. You will save me, if no one else will."

She had run round to him—away from both—and was on his arm. Vivian saw how things stood in a second.

"Surely," he said, perhaps on purpose, "with your friend, Mr. West, here, no one would have ventured—"

"And what do *you* want?" said the "colonel in retreat," now baffled. "So you are her preserver! Then, let me tell you, mees was not so anxious for you, after all. Bah! What are you worth?"

"Don't speak to me," said Vivian, coolly, and it seemed to Lucy with the most splendid hauteur. "Why do you intrude your drunkenness here on a private party? I give you two seconds, or I call that gendarme, who has his eye on you already."

The colonel gave one look of ferocity, then recollected himself and became quite changed. With a ferocious politeness he bowed, and then drew himself up, saying: "I see; very good, monsieur, and very good, *you*, too, monsieur. All in good time; every one in his turn. I have the honour to wish you good night. Mademoiselle, receive my homage."

"Another minute," said Vivian, when he had gone, "and I had taken him by his thick throat and kicked him out of the place. A low ruffian! But, Mr. West, I am astonished! You, an Englishman and a friend, to look on so long!"

"Yes," said Lucy, her voice trembling, "Mr. West was letting me be insulted there before his face. He would have let this man go on, only, thank God, *you* came. As I live, he was taking no notice, and, as I believe, would have left me there, dear Vivian."

West was speechless, and looked from one to the other a little wildly. "No! no! You to say this!"

"He was too busy," Lucy went on, in the same tone of bitter contempt, "listening and eavesdropping to our conversation. He could do that, but he could not be generous to raise his hand for one he hated!"

West said not a word. Vivian looked at him from head to foot, and said, half pityingly: "I am sorry for this. But come away, dearest, we must get back. Your good father, it seems, went off long ago to Dieppe. I have got a carriage waiting, and I think it better that we should get home as quickly as possible."

West stood there looking after them in a sort of stupefaction. Long after did he recall Lucy's haughty contempt. It had pierced him like a dagger. Suddenly he felt Vivian's hand on his arm. "The carriage is here, and you had better return with us. You should do this, and I think it would be only right."

"What!" said the other, bitterly. "You think I am so weak and *unsettled in mind*, that I cannot be trusted here alone?"

"What folly! This sensitiveness is worthy only of pity; but I am sorry you should have condescended to *that*."

"You dare not charge me with such a thing," said West, vehemently. "*She* dare not, either! It is a slander. Do not think I will submit to

you two—leagued to torture me out of happiness, and honour, and life itself!"

"There is no such thing dreamed of," the other said, calmly, "except in your own morbid imagination. The reason I ask you to return with us is for *her* sake. You know what sort of a place Dieppe is."

"I see," said West, bitterly; "for fear of the stories! But will *that* affect the matter? What about the rest of this precious day? All this evening, when she was wandering over the country with you! Who will explain or clear up *that*? I tell you it is shocking and discreditable. And you come to *me* to patch up things. I shall have no part in it. I refuse."

Vivian looked at him in astonishment and sorrow, and, without a word, turned away. In a few moments, West heard the wheels of their carriage.

The unhappy gentleman, looking still in the direction in which they had disappeared, repeated vacantly: "Yes, they are right; it is coming fast to *that*. Madness will finish all; and perhaps it will be the best end of all. The cruel, cruel girl! But she—they shall not be happy in my shipwreck. They shall have real cause to fear or to hate me."

CHAPTER XXVII. A CHANGE.

SUDDENLY a scheme darted into his head. That Frenchman, "the colonel in retreat," he would not pass over what had occurred. Then he would gladly meet him, anywhere and anyhow. "And if he kills me, which he is sure to do, that pitiless girl will have that blood on her head, and may then repent!" Here was a practical plan, action, something "to do," which he longed for.

"Why, West, my boy," said a voice, "you look like Hamlet and the ghost. Methinks I see my father's spirit. Hey? What ails you? Where's 'my Lulu' as that fool of a Daeres calls her; and where's I among—I among aimay? Eh? Does that touch you under the fifth rib?"

West was quite ready to resent Captain Filby's impertinence; but he had a reason for restraint. "They are gone away," he said, calmly; "gone home."

"What, together? Oh, nice pranks! I saw some of their proceedings to-day."

"I dare say," said West. "I can believe anything—of him, at least. Is it generous, is it honourable, is it fair, for a man who should know the world, to take advantage because a young girl likes him, and bring her to a place of this sort, to be insulted by common ruffians?"

"Insulted by common ruffians? Phew!" said the captain, greatly interested. "You don't tell me so."

"I am afraid—that is, I am glad—I have been drawn into a quarrel with a French captain here about it. I have no friend. I never had any in my whole life, and perhaps it has been the best for me. But you, even as an Englishman, you wouldn't stand by and see one of the same country go out to be murdered?"

Captain Filby shaded his old eyes to get a

good look at West. His first impression was "Drunk;" his next, "Mad as any hatter alive." But he relished the proposal. In the regiment he had often assisted in such affairs. There was one young man who it was said owed his death to the management of Captain Filby, who had ferociously refused an apology. "I'd be glad to see you shoot a Frenchman, West; and though this infernal rheumatism is racking my life, I'll go out with you. And, what's more, I have the old pair of executioners with me." His face quite lit up with pleasure at this proposal of enjoyment; and indeed he told West that he would find it do him a world of good, and bring all to a head nicely.

As the captain turned away, a stout, unhealthy-looking man, not unlike Colonel Pepin, but a good deal shabbier, came up to West with a bow. "I am Pequinet, formerly lieutenant. (He was also "ancient" and "in retreat.") "The honour of my friend, Colonel Pepin, was wounded to-night. You will permit me to have the honour of informing you—by your behaviour—he insists on reparation."

"Which he shall have," said West, with alacrity. "When and where you please; as long and as often as you like. Now."

"Folly, stuff!" said Captain Filby, thrusting himself forward. "What *are* you saying? Leave this to me, or leave it alone. To-morrow, sir! All in good time. We shall see you in Dieppe."

They drove home. He dropped Captain Filby at his own house; then walked home himself. As he was crossing the Place, a figure fluttered by him, whom he looked at absently, and hastened on. The figure had hurried after him, and was beside him. "Mon ami," it said, "I am so delighted. I heard of you to-day, from your good sister. God will bless this noble attempt of yours to conquer yourself."

West answered him impatiently: "I have made no exertion, and want no blessing. The finest and most perfect nature could not do it. All the demons of hell seem leagued against me to persecute and harass me!"

The abbé looked at him sorrowfully. "After all, it is only the usual course. We must try many times before we succeed, and fail, and fail again. I did not expect it. We must not lose heart."

"Ah! we can all preach," said West, bitterly. "I have been too gentle hitherto. Good night."

"Hear me a moment," said the abbé, anxiously. "I am going your way——"

"I am tired of advice," said West, stopping impatiently, "and I am not one of your flock, M. l'Abbé. Oh! forgive me, dear, good sir, but you know not what I have gone through, and what I have to go through. If you knew *that*, indeed. Give me your prayers; they can do no harm."

The abbé looked after him sorrowfully, and then went his way without a word.

As West went up-stairs, the two women heard his heavy step enter his own room, and

shut the door impatiently. The two faces were turned to each other with blank consternation. They knew the whole story, as though they had witnessed it themselves. Indeed, on his mental state they hung suspended, like relatives or children on the health of an invalid parent, whose restoration of to-day, or relapse of to-morrow, sends joy or gloom through the house.

They did not see him that night. In the morning, at breakfast-time, they read a whole night of trouble in his face, with the enforced calm infinitely more distressful. They knew he had been out betimes that morning. He had come back moody and silent, yet with a strange and restless fire in his eye. Then, to their greater astonishment, Captain Filby called, being "made up," as Mr. Dacres would have said, "to the ninety-nines"—whatever standard that was. All that day he remained at home. They heard his ceaseless pacing. Their wistful faces were turned often to each other with a hopeless speculation. Something dreadful, it seemed, was coming.

About three o'clock he came in to them.

"I am going away," he said, abruptly; "perhaps for an hour or two, perhaps for a very, very long time. I cannot endure this any longer. I am weak, wretched, helpless, contemptible. I have let this miserable childish delusion prey on me until I cannot live or sleep. Dear Margaret and Constance, I have been very selfish and cruel to you both, but you will forgive me. It is time it should end, one way or the other."

"Oh! Gilbert, Gilbert, what does all this mean?" cried Margaret, suddenly becoming natural. "What are you going to do?"

At that moment the *bonne* came up to say that a gentleman, M. Vivian, wished to see him. At that name West started, and then went down to him. Vivian was cold, and even stern.

"I have only just learned," he said, "that you are about taking a step which must not be thought of for a moment."

West understood him perfectly.

"Why not, pray?" he said, calmly. "It is my own affair altogether, is it not?"

"Why not?" repeated Vivian, excitedly. "First, because *she* is concerned, and we must not have her pure name sullied by any vulgar quarrel."

"It is *my* affair," repeated West, slowly. "Her name is not concerned at all. Who wishes to sully it?"

"Not concerned? Do you know what sort of a place this is? I am astonished you do not see this yourself," said Vivian, passionately. "I *did* think you were noble and generous, and that her name, or any woman's name, would have been a talisman. But there is another reason, which is conclusive. I have seen the chief of the police; and the person you quarrelled with, and wish to meet as a gentleman, is a low ruffian, who was turned out of the army years ago."

West stared at him, but put a constraint upon himself. "And you," he said, abruptly,

"who are so interested for her—what is your office? What is to be your relation to her, if I might ask? Do they not say she is to marry you?"

Vivian coloured. "That would be my greatest happiness, and I do look forward to it one day."

"Ah!" interrupted the other, fiercely; "I see. The usual generality! I can see what that means. That will not impose on me. I have watched you. I can see behind *that* trick. There is some game being played; and perhaps Heaven may put it into my hands to frustrate it."

"What do you mean?" said the other, turning still paler.

"Not from any love to her: I owe *her* nothing. But with you I can reckon. There is some mystery in this hanging back. How confused you grow! I am right. By Heaven, I am!"

"This is all madness," said Vivian, turning away.

"Yes," said West; "but you shall find I have method, too. *Now* we understand each other, Colonel Vivian; and let her understand me, and tell her her cruel and unkind words have sunk into my heart. God forgive her!"

"That is all for yourself," said Vivian, excitedly. "And I warn you, in return, we shall be on our guard; and I tell you, plainly, any frantic step on your side shall be met on mine in a way you little dream of."

"Good," said the other. "We understand each other now!"

But we, who know what sort of a place Dieppe was, its surprising sensitiveness to the smallest rumour or whisper of a rumour, can conceive that such a momentous adventure as Lucy's must permeate the place like water through a gravelly soil.

Before the evening came, Mr. Blacker, the official scandal-monger, was in possession of some strange details. He had become inflated with the vast importance of the matter, and had gone express to Mrs. Dalrymple. "Such an awkward, such a very doubtful business! God forbid, ma'am, it was *my* daughter. West, I am told, found her down at that little dirty guinguette, actually sitting with some low Frenchman. I am afraid, badly brought up; but you know, with that harum-scarum father, what could you expect?"

Mrs. Dalrymple, who had always been partial to West, and knew his worth, had long ago "turned" against Lucy. She now spoke warmly. "I am afraid I could believe anything of that girl. You know how lightly and cruelly she treated poor Gilbert West. The

man is suffering there before her eyes, and she hasn't even a kind look or word for him."

"Oh! but, my dear lady," said Mr. Blacker, with infinite relish, "I haven't half done. I was coming to him. What does she do, I'm told, but drag *him* into a quarrel with this questionable French friend of hers."

"Good Heavens!" said Mrs. Dalrymple, absorbed in interest, "you don't tell me so! What things we hear every day!"

"That poor infatuated West, in his gentle way, tried to remonstrate with her, and she turned on him, ma'am, and got her champion to turn on him, and only for the police, ma'am, there'd have been a duel."

This was really dramatic news for the colony. Not every day did they meet with a morsel so substantial.

The Dear Girl was utterly unconscious of the fiery cross of scandal being thus sent round. Indeed, she never had been so happy as during these days; for since that holiday "her Vivian's heart," as the old story-tellers would say, had never been so much hers.

Vivian himself seemed now not to think of the old difficulties—perhaps shut his eyes to them. He told her he had a presentiment that they were to be soon happy, and that shortly, which was accepted as an official revelation. They were both living in a dream; and, above all, she could meet with calm eye and cold gaze the look of the man who had shown his hatred and malignity to her in unmistakable terms. But as she walked by exultant and triumphant on her lover's arm, she could not but notice the smiles, and looks, and whispers which followed her.

NOTE ON "THE GREAT MAN-MILLINER."

WE have been asked to state that Mr. Worth of Paris, whose proficiency in the millinery art was described at page 564 of our last volume, did not begin life as a tailor, but as an apprentice to "one of the most celebrated silk mercers at the West-end of London."

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